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# RECOLLECTIONS ON THE WAY

Clergywomen in Full Connection  
in the California Nevada Conference  
of the United Methodist Church  
1956 - 2006

BX  
8345.7  
.046  
2006

Bob Olmstead and Odette Lockwood-Stewart



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## *Preface*

- Bishop Beverly J. Shamana

I was 36 before I saw a woman preach from the pulpit or serve communion, although I'd been in church since infancy. It changed my life. It wasn't long after that mid-career light bulb that I knew seminary was my goal and ministry was my life. I thank God for the women who answered the call to ordained ministry in the early years and carved a path for the rest of us in our later years. Just recently a man at a church where I'd preached came up to me with deep emotion and shared his great joy for his pre-teen daughters who were with him. "I'm so glad they could see a woman in your position. Now they know that it's possible for them to do this." His genuine hope for his girls was evident and passionate. Many other clergy women share this same experience of pointing the way.

The women's chorus at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary had a theme song during my years of 1976 – 80. It is a compelling musical image of the long line of splendor of women clergy that pre-dates the 1956 vote for full clergy rights for women. Songwriter Dory Ellzey gathered up our fervor in her potent words that looked both ways. I offer my genuine thanks for the ones who came before me and the ones who are yet to come.

*"There are times we reach an opening  
...of a door, a coming through;  
and we know the situation calls for something new.  
There are times we cannot see what lies ahead  
but still we know, there is a life to be led,  
a path to follow and we must go.  
And we must go.....  
"And the ones who come before us will show us the way.  
And the ones who follow after will welcome the new day.  
And the ones who come before us will join in the chorus when we do—  
when we make it through."*

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of clergywomen gaining full connection in the United Methodist Church. Women have always engaged in ministry, the great majority of them as lay women in local churches and as committed disciples in occupations and professions. Women in various Wesleyan traditions have been granted ordination since the 1880's. The 1924 General Conference of the Methodist Church granted women ordination rights but denied them full connection. Prior to 1956 women were serving the Church in many professional capacities. Deaconesses filled a variety of roles and women were ordained local elders. Nevertheless, the granting of full connection to United Methodist clergywomen was a momentous step. Otherwise why did it meet such resistance?

The story of women in ministry in the United Methodist Church can be told from many perspectives. This booklet recounts only a slice of time and perspective: the first 50 years following 1956 and the clergywomen who came into full connection in the California-Nevada Conference during that period. These are "recollections" from clergywomen who have served within the California-Nevada Conference as ordained elders and deacons in full connection from 1956 through 2006. Much of the story remains to be told, but it is good to use the occasion of an anniversary to pause and re-collect some of the milestones (and millstones) encountered along the way.

We begin by recognizing the contributions of women in ministry in the California-Nevada Conference prior to 1956. This draws from Martha Rowlett's 1975 publication, *Women of the Ministry: California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church*. For historical perspective we provide a brief summary of women's ministerial roles within Methodism in the 1700's and 1800's.

Dr. Georgia Harkness, a member of the California-Nevada Conference, spearheaded the advocacy of full clergy rights for women. That effort culminated in 1956, but we cannot say "and the rest is history" because history is still being made. We are *on the way*.

What follows are recollections on the way, a way pioneered by lay women, deaconesses, diaconal ministers and ordained clergywomen.

- Bob Olmstead

Women served the California-Nevada Conference as pastors, evangelists, educators and church organizers prior to 1956. They were not guaranteed an appointment. They "supplied" churches that were left vacant after all the Conference members (male) had been appointed. Several California-Nevada women were ordained for "local" ministry, while others served as deaconesses and licensed local pastors. Many women eschewed all titles but did not allow that to crimp their ministry.

Maggie Van Cott served in San Francisco and Sacramento in the 1870's. A Sacramento reporter described her arrival this way: "Our anticipation concerning Mrs. Van Cott were pleasantly disappointed. Free from every shadow of a masculine air, she is in all her characteristics a true-hearted woman. She is evidently in bearing, in dress, in delicacy, in manners, a refined lady by birth and education. ... Her power of endurance is marvelous. During her labors for six weeks in Sacramento, she preached without intermission, eight sermons a week and conducted three prayer-meetings each day, besides private counsel and prayer with the many anxious inquirers."

In 1924 Bishop Charles Wesley Burns appointed Frances Kallstedt "assistant pastor local charge" to Central Methodist Church in Stockton. A local paper headlined: "Stockton Has Only City Woman Pastor in Northern California" and added that "Miss Kallstedt performs marriages when Rev. Dr. H.D. Milnes, the pastor, is not present or unable to do so, and she has the authority to officiate at funerals also. Last summer Miss Kallstedt gave the sermon at a Sunday morning service of Central Church."

The same newspaper article reported that "the California conference has five women holding rural charges. One of these is Mrs. Edgell, wife of the Rev. J.W. Edgell, formerly pastor of the Escalon Church, who is taking her husband's place in Oakley, Contra Costa county, because of his ill health."

The "Four Fordsmen", Charlotte Hickman, Beulah Baldaree, Charlotte Jones and Clarice Myers, served neighboring rural churches in the Redwood Empire District. In an area where ranch houses were far apart and one-lane dirt roads

connected small towns, these four women served long pastorates and developed cooperative programs for children and young adults. Their Christian camping program was adopted by the Conference (and later nationally) as the model for Christian camping programs for children and youth.

Bertha Smith Spotts wrote of her work in the 1930s: "I was sent to Battle Mountain and Carlin, Nevada. Since I was the only resident Protestant pastor I had to have, besides the regular church services and work, the funerals, graduation addresses, etc. I held the Sunday morning service in Battle Mountain, then went by train to Carlin and held the evening service. ... One night in Carlin there were nineteen in jail and twenty-nine in church. We thought that was pretty good. ... Part of this time I didn't receive enough to rent a room, so I fixed up the church parlor and lived there."

Pearl Bradshaw, ordained local deacon in this Conference in 1957, worked as a team with her husband with Native American groups in Oregon and Nevada. They worked with the Paiute and Shoshone tribes at Schurz and Yerington, Nevada for 19 years, from 1944 to 1963. Pearl Bradshaw wrote, "I have served as secretary to an Indian chief, girls' matron at a government boarding school, organizer of granges, Red Cross knitting instructor in two world wars, and did extension home economics with both children and adults."

Melissa Buckner and Betty Zartman served several small churches. Some of those churches grew out of the "small church" category during their ministries.

Dorothy Gleason White graduated from the Kansas City National Training School for Deaconesses and Missionaries in 1928. After deaconess appointments in Georgia, Wyoming, Illinois and Washington, she came to California in 1941. She held staff positions at First Methodist Church in Modesto and St. Paul's Methodist Church in South San Francisco. In 1948 she took a year's leave of absence to complete her A.B. degree at University of the Pacific.

As a supply pastor, beginning in 1949, she discovered a capacity for organizing new churches. She is credited with starting Hillsdale, San Mateo (1949); Alum Rock, San Jose (1951); Cambrian Park, San Jose (1952); Lakewood, Sunnyvale (1957); Wesley, Daly City (1959); and Church of the Valley, Napa (1961). In 1962 the Marina church became the seventh church she organized in the California-Nevada Conference.

In 1960 Dorothy Gleason was ordained a local deacon and two years later a local elder. But she never requested full connection. Perhaps she was too busy.

## The 1700's

Early Methodism flourished under the direction of class leaders. They were persons of spiritual strength and insight. Many, perhaps most of them, were women.

Nevertheless, from its inception Methodism has been ambivalent about the role of women in leadership, often blurring distinctions and definitions to gain the benefit of women's faith, creativity, dedication, and leadership while offering "plausible deniability" to their actual office or authority.

A case could be made that Wesleyanism dates from the moment, in 1711, when Susanna Wesley adopted the practice (in her husband's absence) of reading the Bible or sermons to her family and instructing them. Others, hearing about this, asked if they could be part of her teaching. The group increased to over two hundred, and the parsonage could not contain all who came.

While John Wesley, for the most part, did not encourage women to preach in the early decades of the Methodist movement, he recognized and encouraged women as leaders in a variety of ways. Some of Wesley's followers tried to exclude women from a number of the societies' activities, but Wesley made it clear women should not be excluded when the societies met to pray, sing, and read Scriptures.

By the 1760's women were preaching at several local Methodist societies and sometimes beyond the meetings of their local societies, though none were officially listed among the traveling or local preachers. Sarah Crosby, a class-leader at the Foundery, began preaching when the class she organized grew to over two hundred persons with no preacher in sight. In 1761 John Wesley told Crosby, "the Methodists do not allow of women preachers." A small group of women led by Crosby, Sarah Ryan and Mary Bosanquet, then established a school and orphanage at Leytonstone, Essex in 1763. Their home provided a center of Methodist activity, including prayer services at which the women "felt led to speak."

Sarah Crosby was indefatigable in her

preaching. So Wesley offered this disingenuous advice in 1769: "(1) Pray in private or public as much as you can. (2) Even in public you may properly enough intermix *short exhortations* with prayer. But keep as far from what is called preaching as you can. Therefore never take a text; never speak in a continued discourse without some break, about four or five minutes . . ."

Whether the women interrupted their sermons with five-minute breaks is not recorded.

In 1771 Mary Bosanquet wrote to Wesley and in a letter combining biblical exegesis and spiritual mandate, she said, "I do not believe every woman is called to speak publicly, no more than every man to be a Methodist preacher, yet some have an extraordinary call to it, and woe be to them if they obey it not."

Wesley accepted the argument of the "extraordinary call", recognizing that "the whole work of God termed Methodism" was an "extraordinary dispensation" of God's providence. Thereafter Wesley made exceptions to the ordinary rules of discipline. (The rules never got changed, but Wesley granted "exceptions" for specific women.)

The practice of employing women preachers soon grew beyond Wesley's personal control and he tried to curtail it. In March, 1780, he sent instructions to John Peacock, the Assistant at Grimsby, to put a "final stop to the preaching of women" in his circuit. "If it were suffered," Wesley added, "it would grow, and we know not where it would end."

Pragmatic as always, Wesley then rescinded his own directive in 1787, and defended Sarah Mallett's right to continue preaching "so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrines and attends to our discipline." This was a personal written note; her name never appears in the Minutes listing regular preachers.

Since women's role as preachers was never made official in the Minutes, their ministry temporarily disappeared at Wesley's death. He was no longer there to authenticate their individual ministries via a personal memo.

## The 1800's

Women played a central role in the development of American Methodism. The "holiness" movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shook

America. Women often led the outbreaks of "holiness" and Methodism was a leader of the movement. But even as women grew conspicuous for their personal "holiness", men increasingly claimed institutional power and authority.

David Hempton writes: "There is one further twist to the story of women, Methodism, and nation building. ... The Victorian cult of domesticity was at least in part a Methodist creation. The consequences both for women and for the church were mixed. ... While [women] gained as instruments of the middle-class domestic piety that shaped great tracts of American culture in the nineteenth century, they also lost as public agents of the religious movement that helped domesticate them." (David Hempton, Methodism: Empire of the Spirit, Yale University Press, 2005)

Several denominations and traditions contributed to what we now call The *United* Methodist Church. Some of these granted women clergy rights much earlier than 1956.

Richard Allen left the Methodist Episcopal Church in the early 1800's to found the African Methodist Episcopal Church. As AME bishop he supported Jarena Lee and allowed her to respond to her call to preach.

In 1868 the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church removed the word "men" from its rules for the regulation of ordination.

Anna Howard Shaw came to the United States from England at the age of 4 in 1851. When she was 12 her family moved to Michigan. In the woods of the frontier she preached to the trees. She told her father she would go to college, though she had never known a woman to do so. She was rebuked by her family but pursued her dream.

Recommended for ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Andrews refused to ordain her on the basis of her being a woman. She took this decision to the General Conference and was again refused. Anna said, "I do not intend to fight my church. But I am called to preach the Gospel; and if I cannot preach it in my own church, I will certainly preach it in some other church."

She took her application for ordination to the Methodist Protestant Church, where Helenor Alter Davisson had been ordained in 1866. A three day debate ensued and she was questioned extensively. She replied with theological and scriptural bases for her ordination. A large majority

of the Conference ultimately approved. She was ordained a Methodist minister on October 12, 1880.

The United Brethren in Christ was a denomination of German speaking Wesleyans formed in 1800 by Martin Boehm and Philip William Otterbein among the German-speaking people of the Middle Atlantic states. They followed the Methodist Discipline.

In the mid-nineteenth century the United Brethren Church granted Charity Opheral a quarterly conference license to preach and the General Conference recommended Lydia Sexton as a "pulpit speaker."

At the 1889 Central Illinois Annual Conference, Brethren Bishop E. B. Kephart granted licenses to preach to Ella Niswonger and Maggie Elliot. He ordained Niswonger two days later. In his report he stated: "Two very intelligent Christian ladies were licensed to preach at this session, and the first woman ordained to elder's orders by order of an annual conference in the history of the denomination. Is the Millennium dawning? God grant it."

At age 18, Sarah Dickey traveled south to Vicksburg, Mississippi, to form a school for freed slaves after the Civil War. Realizing that she needed more education, she arrived at Mt. Holyoke College without a penny. The college granted her a full scholarship and upon graduation she returned to Mississippi to form Mt. Herman School for black children. Because of her sheer persistence and determination, the Ohio Conference of the United Brethren Church finally granted her request to be ordained.

Minnie Jackson Goins became the first black woman ordained as an elder in full connection in the Church of the Brethren in Christ in 1904.

### The E.U.B. Tradition Virginia Hilton

*My father was a United Brethren minister. In his graduating class of 1932 at Bonebrake Theological Seminary (now United Seminary in Dayton, Ohio) a third of the class were women.*

*Two who most influenced me were the Rev. Sadie Richardson and the Rev. Sarah Mouer. They graduated from Bonebrake in 1930 and were ordained in the Wisconsin Conference. They served as traveling evangelists, helping with vacation Bible*

*schools and adult Bible studies, and preaching at night. When that schedule became exhausting they served small churches, often two or three, in what was called a "three point charge."*

*I remember sitting in the Annual Conference session, listening to the Bishop read the appointments. Sarah Mouer had me sit with her, because I think she knew my father was going to get another appointment, and she knew I would be upset about moving again. ...*

*Sarah Mouer and Sadie Richardson served in the Wisconsin Conference all of their ministry. They are buried together in the cemetery at Richland Center, Wisconsin, with a tomb stone that says, "Together in Ministry for Forty Years."*

*During World War II my mother, Marguerite Young, was granted a quarterly conference license to preach, and served as pastor of the United Brethren Church in New Auburn, Wisconsin. ...*

*When the United Brethren Church merged with the Evangelical Church in 1946, we basically lost the right of ordination for women. It was left to the discretion of the bishop. So if there was a former U.B. bishop, women might have a chance, but it was rare. ...*

The Evangelical United Brethren Church merged with the *United* Methodist Church in 1968, but neither Virginia Hilton nor Harvey Chinn, who came from the EUB tradition, remembers ordained EUB women clergy serving in California or Nevada.

### Dr. Georgia Harkness

Dr. Georgia Harkness is known as "the woman in the men's room of theology." She is a giant figure in American Methodism. As a child she was regularly converted at country revivals. After an adolescent crisis of faith she realized she knew no-one of whom to ask questions, since she knew no-one who did not believe in God. She ultimately made a career of writing books and teaching "practical" theology that addressed people's religious questions and concerns.

At Boston University Dr. Edgar Brightman encouraged Harkness to pursue a Ph.D. She then taught at Elmira College from 1922 to 1937, publishing several books on philosophical topics. On his deathbed, her father urged her to "write more

about Jesus Christ.” She took up that challenge through successive faculty positions at Mt. Holyoke College, Garrett Biblical Institute and Pacific School of Religion.

She served as a delegate to many international and ecumenical gatherings, including a succession of World Council of Churches meetings. At the 1948 Oxford meeting of the World Council she and Karl Barth engaged in a spirited exchange on the place of women in the Church. The chairperson of the section unexpectedly raised the issue and asked for her position on the subject. She cited Genesis 1 as evidence that women and men are both created in the image of God, and she cited Jesus’ equal treatment of women. Barth took the floor to argue the contrary. He argued that woman was created from Adam’s rib and cited Ephesians 5, that Christ is head of the Church just as man is head of the woman. An excited argument ensued and Harkness added a reference to Galatians 3:28 buttressing her position: In Christ there is neither male nor female. One year later Barth was asked if he remembered meeting an American woman theologian at Oxford, and he replied, “Remind me not of that woman!”

“That woman” wrote popular books on prayer, holiness, pacifism and progressive social issues. She profoundly influenced several generations of Christians across denominational lines. She wrote a note of encouragement to Martin Luther King, Jr. while he was hospitalized following a stabbing. He replied that she need not identify herself to him, for he was well acquainted with her books and greatly influenced by her progressive theology.

While teaching at Pacific School of Religion she was active at Trinity UMC in Berkeley. Douglas Hayward was her pastor. In a pulpit biography of Dr. Harkness he says, “...*For some years while in Evanston at Garrett and through the rest of her life, Dr. Harkness was blessed with the companionship of Verna Miller.... It was always in Verna’s presence that the more human side of Georgia Harkness was magnified, and the outward appearance of gruffness was transformed into tenderness....*”

Georgia Harkness’s hymn, “*Hope of the World, Thou Christ of Great Compassion*,” is found in The United Methodist Hymnal (#178). She also contributed the third verse of “*This Is My Song*” (#437) and the prayer “*In Time of Illness*” (#460).

Dr. Harkness was a lay delegate to several General Conferences where she was immediately recognized due to the popularity of her books. She advocated full clergy rights for women. “It was passed over rapidly with the usual rejection to the accompaniment of considerable laughter,” Harkness wrote later. After the 1952 General Conference “some of the women present resolved that it would no longer be a laughing matter.” Two thousand petitions on the subject came to the General Conference of 1956. After vigorous debate the General Conference voted to eradicate official sex discrimination in the ministry of the Methodist Church.

*“Hope of the world,  
who by thy cross didst save us  
from death and dark despair, from sin and guilt,  
we render back the love thy mercy gave us;  
take thou our lives, and use them as thou wilt.”*

## The 1956 General Conference

Women were never specifically excluded from full connection in the Methodist Church. But disciplinary provisions governing ordination and full connection used male pronouns exclusively, and on this basis alone some bishops and others maintained that women were excluded from full connection.

In 1956 R. Marvin Stuart, California-Nevada clergy delegate, chaired the sub-committee which considered more than 2000 resolutions (called “memorials”) related to full clergy rights for women. He brought the majority report of the sub-committee to the floor of the General Conference on Friday morning, May 4. Several hours of discussion and parliamentary maneuvering followed, bringing proposed amendments, substitute motions, amendments to amendments, amendments to substitutes and substitutes for amendments, in seemingly endless procession.

The majority report of the sub-committee was a compromise, recommending full connection to “unmarried women and widows.” It was voted out of committee by a margin of 40 (for) and 32 (against).

A minority report of the sub-committee called for leaving all provisions concerning the itinerant ministry unchanged. Rules required the minority report to be considered first.

Amendments to the minority report were



attempted and several substitute motions were made. Most of these represented further compromises. No one spoke against the ministry of "ladies." The discussion and the compromises focused instead on administrative problems that would arise if women were guaranteed appointments. The plight of District Superintendents was frequently invoked, assuming they would be forced to appoint women to churches where women pastors would be unwelcome.

One amendment defeated after extensive debate read: "Women are eligible for all orders of the ministry and full Conference membership; provided, however, that a woman may be left without appointment, and with action by the Annual Conference thereby located whenever the bishop and cabinet are satisfied that all reasonable efforts have been made and no suitable appointment for her can be found. Her status and pension rights shall then be the same as those of a minister who has been located at his own request."

Another defeated amendment read: "Women are included in all provisions, except that married women can only be so included by a three-fourths vote of the Annual Conference."

Count votes were called for in each case and amendment after amendment and substitute after substitute was voted down by a consistent 60% of those voting.

The afternoon session was extended into the dinner hour "to complete the matter," until one final amendment to the substitute for the majority report was made (to applause). It read: "That Paragraph 313 shall be amended to read: Women are included in the foregoing provisions and may apply as candidates for the traveling ministry as provided for in chapter 3 of the 'Discipline', Title-Traveling Preachers, paragraphs 321-368."

The maker of the motion, Zach T. Johnson, concluded his very brief statement in favor by saying, "Let us give women the perfect right to apply on the same basis as any member of any Annual Conference in Methodism. This does that."

A vote was taken and the presiding bishop announced that the motion had failed. There were cries for a count-vote. There were other cries asking what was being voted on. The amendment was again read and explained to clear up prevailing confusion.

A delegate from Ohio said, "Mr. Chairman, I want to ask a question of parliamentary inquiry. I want to ask the chair, if the chair interprets this

amendment to grant full clergy rights to women, which is what I understand it to be and is the reason I am for it."

Bishop King replied, "It is my understanding that this amendment grants full clergy rights to women." (Applause)

The Bishop then asked those voting for the amendment to stand; then he asked those voting against to stand. The count-vote was 389 in favor and 297 opposed.

The General Conference reconvened at 7:45 that evening. Dr. Georgia Harkness was brought to the platform. She had said nothing that day. As she was introduced the Conference rose to their feet and applauded her. Rev. Robert Moon was present and he remembers the quiet dignity with which she stood and accepted the applause. Then, to a hushed General Conference she said simply, "I must have a moment to thank you for this very wonderful expression. Some of you wondered why I didn't speak this afternoon. It says in the Bible there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. I thought we would do better if we let the rest of you speak. Thank you."

## 1956

Mary Louise Long  
Eva Blanton Maxwell  
Jessie O. Todd

The 1956 California-Nevada Annual Conference was held in sweltering heat and without air-conditioning at University of the Pacific in Stockton. On Saturday, June 16, Bishop Donald Harvey Tippet received Jessie Todd, Louise Long and Eva Maxwell as probationary members of the Conference. Jessie Todd and Louise Long were already ordained elders. Eva Maxwell was then ordained deacon (which at that time was a probationary status on the way to elder's orders). At the conclusion of the service Bishop Tippet suggested singing "I Know Not What the Future Hath, of Marvel or Surprise."

Two years later Jessie Todd, Louise Long and Eva Maxwell were received into full connection in the California-Nevada Conference and Eva Maxwell was ordained elder. They became in 1958 the first women to receive full clergy rights in the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Jessie Todd, Eva Maxwell and Louise Long were all in mid-life and mid-ministry when granted full membership. All were single women. All were retired by the time the next woman was granted full membership in the California-Nevada Conference. All are deceased as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their break-through.

## Jessie O. Todd

Jessie Todd was Conference Director of Children's Work in 1958 and perhaps in deference to her status as part of the Conference program staff she was accorded the honor of being received into Full Connection "first."

After teaching at the high school level for several years Jessie Todd enrolled at Boston University School of Theology to major in religious education, graduating in 1930. In 1933 she was asked to "supply" the West Yolo Parish (Guinda), and from 1936-1943 she served as pastor of the Methodist Church in Fallon, Nevada.

When California law made "released time" Christian education possible, Jessie Todd came to Sacramento to serve as a weekday teacher for the Sacramento Council of Churches. In 1951 she was named Executive Director for the San Mateo County Council of Churches.

In Newell Knudson's history of the California-Nevada Conference, *Adventure in Faith*, Jessie Todd is described as "a strong leader in the area of religious growth of children, conducting workshops and training conferences and providing resources for children's workers in local churches. She devoted a great deal of time to the Conference camping program for children and was lovingly known as "Aunt Jessie" to numerous boys and girls.... Jessie had a warm and outgoing personality, a hearty laugh, and a concern for progressive social movements."

John Moore remembers:

*Some women were serving churches in our Conference as local elders (as contrasted with traveling elders) when I became a Conference member in 1949. They had full ordination rights in the local churches they were serving. They did not have rights of Conference membership, nor did they vow to take whatever appointment bishops gave them. . . .*

*In 1949 [I was appointed] to serve the Orange Avenue Methodist Church in Del Paso*

*Heights which Jessie had organized. ... Jessie had gathered twelve committed women who were the heart and backbone of the church through its early years.*

*Later Jessie served as Director of Children's Ministry of the Annual Conference . . .*

Jessie Todd took retired relationship with the Annual Conference in 1967, though she continued as Director of Christian Education at Temple UMC in San Francisco until Parkinson's Disease forced her into convalescent care. She died March 8, 1975.

## Mary Louise Long

Louise Long is invariably described as "unusual", "stimulating", "unique" and "free spirit".

She served as Director of the Wesley Foundation at Oklahoma A & M University prior to enrolling at Garrett Biblical Institute (as it was then named). She majored in pastoral care and psychology, later completing a course in clinical pastoral education at Elgin State Hospital, in Illinois. From there she became chaplain-supervisor at the state mental hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. In California she served as chaplain at state hospitals in Modesto, Auburn, and Atascadero.

Nearing retirement she asked for appointment to the Mendocino Coast Parish, where she served United Methodist charges in Elk, Fort Bragg, and Point Arena. She retired in 1977, built a home overlooking the ocean near Mendocino and lived there with her cats until her death in 1994.

Gilbert Viera remembers her as "a stimulating colleague ... sharp personality, good conversationalist, a wonderfully free spirit."

Her Conference memoir describes her as "hearty, outspoken, opinionated, and positive in her convictions. She was Freudian in her orientation and had little regard for other schools of psychology and counseling. Her ministry was effective, and she described it vividly in her book, *Door of Hope*...."

During the last years of Louise Long's life she required round-the-clock care due to failing health. A successful businessman she had counseled while he was hospitalized at Modesto State Hospital provided all the financing needed to make 24-hour home care possible for her. He said it was a small price to pay because Chaplain Long had once saved his life by helping him recover his mental and emotional health.

## Eva Blanton Maxwell

Eva Blanton Maxwell enrolled in Pacific School of Religion after the death of her husband, George L. Maxwell at age 51. She served principally as Minister of Christian Education in several large churches: Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu; First Methodist Church, Sacramento; First Methodist Church, Palo Alto; and First Methodist Church, Oakland.

Don Cunningham, with whom she worked in Oakland, wrote, "Eva liked to see things grow - plants, churches, people. Whatever she touched, she nurtured with gentleness, love, and patience. She was strong, dignified, courageous, daring to live future goods in difficult presents. Life brought to her a liberal share of burdens, but her faith in God enabled her to stand with a glad and gracious heart."

Eva Maxwell served on staff with two senior pastors who were subsequently elected bishop: A. Raymond Grant and R. Marvin Stuart.

She retired in 1964 and died November 7, 1974.

## 1956-1975

### 1961

Barbara Troxell (New York)

### 1972

Glenda Thomas

### 1973

Phyllis Bird

Roberta Bassett Corson

Martha Graybeal Rowlett

### 1974

Lynn Nell Rhodes (Southern New England)

Full Connection for Jessie Todd, Louise Long and Eva Maxwell in 1958 was affirmation of their ongoing ministries. It would be another 13 years before another woman was received into full connection in the California-Nevada Conference.

Barbara Troxell was ordained elder and received into full connection in the New York Conference in 1961. She served under appointment on Long Island, then came to California as Director

of the YWCA at Stanford University. She served within this Conference for a decade before transferring her membership to California-Nevada in 1971.

Glenda Thomas was the first woman to complete the entire "process" in California-Nevada, being ordained elder and received into full connection in 1972. She was the first married clergywoman in full connection and the first with children.

Phyllis Bird was the first woman admitted to trial membership in the California-Nevada Conference coming directly from school. She was ordained deacon and granted probationary membership in 1963. Her probationary membership lapsed while she pursued an academic Ph.D. It was later restored and she was ordained elder and received into full connection, along with Roberta Corson and Martha Rowlett, in 1973.

Lynn Rhodes grew up in this Conference. She was ordained and received into full connection in the Southern New England Conference in 1974. She transferred her Conference membership to California-Nevada in 1983, after receiving appointment as Associate Professor of Field Education at Pacific School of Religion.

In the 20 years beginning with 1956 only eight women were received into full Conference membership in California-Nevada, and only five began and completed their quest for ordination and full connection during these two decades.

These "pioneers" experienced greater isolation while in seminary than their sisters who followed in later decades. They experienced more resistance to the very idea that they were "called". We tell their stories in some detail and in their own words.

## Barbara Troxell

*At the time of General Conference 1956, I was about to graduate from college. I had been "born into" Kings Highway Methodist Church in Brooklyn, New York, where my father was organist and choir director and my mother was active in the choir and the WSCS. I felt a strong call to ordained pastoral ministry while at Swarthmore College. I received a license to preach while in college. I entered Union Theological Seminary in New York and did field education first in a Methodist Church in the Bronx and then at Embury Methodist Church*

in Queens Village.

I remember well a meeting of the old New York East Conference Board of Ministerial Training and Qualifications (BMTQ-- not as easy an acronym as BOOM!) : a room full of men in dark suits (some with clergy collars, most with white shirts and dark ties) examining me as to whether I was worthy to be continued in the license to preach, and then later whether I was worthy to be ordained deacon and to be "on trial" (the phrase which later became the current "probationary membership"). The questions to me were concerned primarily with whether I could adequately serve as a pastor if I were to marry and have children. ... There were some very supportive men in that company and some who had real doubts.

In 1958, at the end of my second year at Union Theological Seminary in New York, I was ordained deacon by Bishop Frederick Buckley Newell, together with Noemi Diaz, an older Cuban woman who was serving at the Church of All Nations in Manhattan. I was scared and in awe of what was happening, while knowing it was right and good. My photo with Bishop Newell ordaining me was in a local Brooklyn paper (*The Brooklyn Eagle*) with the caption "Girl Ordained Deacon." ...

After graduating from Union, I went for an academic year of study in Scotland in 1959-60, during which time I was receiving regular letters from my excellent and supportive district superintendent (Dr. Henry Whyman) who asked to see me soon after I returned home to Brooklyn. He took me to dinner and then to meet a pastor-parish committee at the Methodist Church in Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y. -- out on Long Island, about 50 miles from New York City. Dr. Whyman had met the Cold Spring Harbor committee earlier and described me and my education and background in local church and district events without using a personal pronoun! At the end of the meeting he told the committee my name; they were shocked but were more open because they did not have an immediate negative bias at the beginning. So in we went to that PPRC, and they were open, curious, a bit unsure, but ultimately OK with the bishop's appointment of this young woman (me!) to their congregation.

My story parallels the stories of several clergy sisters in those early right-after-the-1956-decision years. We were young and somewhat naive, had gone to seminary right after college, had male clergy for our models of ministry, but

nevertheless were called and committed [despite] how rare it was ever to have met a clergywoman, especially in our own denomination. We came in to ordained ministry because we felt called of God to preach and pastor. ... Some of us had paved the way; those who came after were more alert to discrimination and oppression. I certainly learned from the seminarians and clergywomen entering in the 1970's to analyze the issues more clearly and with more of a "hermeneutic of suspicion." ...

I served at Ohio Wesleyan (Delaware, Ohio) as associate chaplain and director of the YWCA, ... I became involved in civil rights struggles, Catholic-Protestant dialogues, and great ministry with students. Later I was invited to be the director of the YWCA at Stanford University, which brought me to California in the summer of 1966. There my involvement with the women's movement and with the anti-Vietnam War movement grew -- in the context of much collaboration with the campus ministries and the Stanford Chapel.

After a sabbatical in 1970-71, I was invited to take a position as associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto, entering into a fine and challenging team ministry. [I] finally transferred my membership from the New York Conference to the California-Nevada Conference (effective 7-1-71).

In 1976 Bishop Stuart appointed me as Conference Council on Ministries Associate Director, bringing me back, as it were, into the United Methodist appointment fold. Two years later, he appointed me Golden Gate District Superintendent. I was the first woman DS in the California-Nevada Conference, and the third in the UMC....

As District Superintendent of a diverse and beautiful district, sitting with a Cabinet of six male superintendents and a male bishop, I learned much and was stretched considerably in my soul and in my ministry. I was in a position of strong authority and contradictory role definitions. ...

After beginning a doctoral program in a sabbatical year, I was invited to be Dean of Students at Pacific School of Religion. The challenges and joys of this ministry eventually led me to drop the ThD studies, which I sometimes regret. ...

In fall, 1988 I began to serve on faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL. I continued there for twelve full-time years until fall, 2000 when I officially retired. [In

*addition to my position as] Assistant (later Associate) Professor of Practical Theology: Director of Field Education and Spiritual Formation, I taught courses in prayer and in spiritual direction, as well as co-teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century United Methodist Studies. What a varied ministry in those years! In the retired years, I continue as Senior Scholar in Spiritual Formation, teaching courses including one on "Women in Ministry Claiming Authority."*

*In much of my adult life, I regularly mentored persons considering and entering ordained ministry, especially women. I also was trained, through Shalem Institute, as a spiritual director, and have found this aspect of my ministry to be a significant part of who I continue to be and what I continue to offer.*

## Glenda Thomas

*The ground-breaking thing [about my ordination] was that I was young, married, and had a young child (Amy was 18 months old when I got my Deacon's Orders, and Colin was in utero). ...*

*The opportunity to attend seminary changed my life: from East Coast to West Coast, from a job to a profession, from Presbyterian to Methodist, and from the life I had been living to living my dream. It had always been my conviction that the "call" to ministry was not truly a calling unless and until it was confirmed by the Church. The local church was my destination of choice....*

*Pacific School of Religion in 1964 is where the journey took me. The harsh reality of racial discrimination in our country demanded everyone's tears and actions. That year I had the good fortune to be in a field work position at Mills Terrace Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in East Oakland. The pastor, Bill Dillinger, was heavily involved in the racial struggle that was tearing our nation apart. He went to Selma during Holy Week in 1965, leaving me to 'run the church.' My normal duties were teaching a high school class, working with junior highs on Sunday evenings, assisting in worship each Sunday and giving a 3-5 minute talk on a verse of Scripture that then invited people to give their tithes and offerings. ... That congregation gave me far more than wonderful experiences, a book, and a goodbye cake and reception; they gave me a love for the local church....*

*In 1968, [my husband] Carl took an*

*appointment at First UMC in Alameda. Our first child, Amy, arrived in November. The calling must now be that of wife and mother. When the D.S., Maxwell Brown and Dorothy, came for dinner one evening, he asked why I was not ordained. A couple of months later, First Church, Alameda, voted to recommend me for a local preacher's license, which was presented to me several months later at Epworth UMC, Berkeley, where Carl was now the associate pastor. Dr. Georgia Harkness was in the congregation that day....*

*In 1969, Wilbur Choy (later Bishop Choy) was our D.S. He told me...that the bishop said I could not be ordained. When I asked him why, he said "because you cannot itinerate." I asked him to put something in writing for me, and he kindly did, quoting the Discipline paragraph on itineracy. He had no personal animosity toward me. A woman, with a husband and a baby, ...had not yet sought ordination in this Conference. It was too new, too different, and undoubtedly too difficult to deal with in the appointment process.*

*James Corson, registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry...told me, "the bishop may have said that, but I think he should say it to a person, not a case." A few weeks later, Jim, Ted Palmquist (senior pastor at Epworth), and I went to San Francisco to meet with Bishop Charles Golden. A week after that, at the bishop's request, Carl and I spent an hour with the bishop. Near the conclusion of our visit, he said, "I think you're serious, and I think you both believe this will work. I will tell the Board to consider your qualifications; I will deal with your appointment." And then he added somewhat wistfully, "I don't think Ida (his wife) would want you for her pastor." ...*

*... In the interview [for deacon's orders] ... the conversation quickly shifted to how Carl and I would manage the cooking and child care and household chores, and what we would do if the baby were sick. In the continuation year between deacon's and elder's orders, in an informal conversation with a Board leader, I was asked what we would do if Carl went to Bakersfield and the Cabinet appointed me to Eureka. Being young and foolish, I probably too quickly replied, "Are there no restrictions on where you would be willing to serve?" He responded that he guessed we all had some limitations on where we would be willing to go.*

*...When I knew the interview with the Board was coming, I put off visiting my doctor because if,*

by some good fortune, I would be ordained, I would need to have a physical exam by a medical doctor about a month prior to ordination. When I did see the doctor, his report to the Board was that I was healthy. He told me one other thing that was not on the form the Board provided..... I was pregnant.... I did not want to play games with the Board about the fact that I would indeed "have a baby in the middle of my ministry." (...One member of the committee had spoken of such a possibility.) I asked Jim [Corson] whether he or I should inform the Board.... His reply: "I don't think it's anybody's business." ...

[An] emotional moment occurred as I knelt for the laying on of hands. It was Bishop Golden's desire that the spouse kneel with the ordinand. Carl had been seated with friends, and Amy, now 18 months old ...suddenly wanted her Daddy to hold her. Rather than have her start crying, he picked her up and brought her with him to the kneeler. At first, she didn't seem to see me, but after the laying on of hands, the bishop's lapel microphone picked up her tiny voice that simply said, "Mommy, Mommy." Several men reported later, "There wasn't a dry eye in the place."

The United Methodist Church, and more particularly my male colleagues in this Conference, opened doors to me in ways I would have never dreamed. To have the honor of being a delegate to General Conferences and Jurisdictional Conferences; to serve on the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; to be on the Probationary Committee of our Conference Board of Ministry and then become registrar and chair of that committee; to preside over a Jurisdictional Court of Appeals; to serve with several bishops and scholars to revise the Ordinal; to serve on a committee to rewrite the already rewritten Chapter VIII on Investigations, Trials, and Appeals; to have served on the original "Committee" on the Status and Role of Women before there was a "Commission"--these and many other doors provided learning experiences beyond imagining.

...I taught United Methodist Polity for two years at PSR. And given a 3-month sabbatical from the local church, I devoted two weeks that summer and for five more years teaching in the Licensing School for Local Pastors at Claremont School of Theology.

There were a number of "firsts" in the seventies and beyond, and every clergywoman alive today can probably recite several things they did

that no ordained woman had ever done before. I recall being the first woman minister to open a session of the California Senate with prayer and the first alumna clergywoman on the PSR Board of Trustees. There were dozens of other "firsts"--not a claim to fame but simply a reflection of the times.

Prior to my last appointment, Bishop Choy invited me to be a District Superintendent.... What a joy to enter that position as newly elected Bishop Leontine Kelly came to our Conference, and then to serve two additional years under Bishop Melvin Talbert. But the greatest joy of thirty-one years in active ministry was the privilege of serving seven different churches, one as the assistant minister, five of them as co-pastor with Carl, and one where I served eleven years as pastor. I thank God and the United Methodist Church, laity and clergy, for fulfilling my dream.

## Phyllis Bird

Phyllis Bird was the first California-Nevada woman to seek ordination and Conference membership directly from school. She was ordained deacon and became a trial member (as per the Discipline of the time) in 1963. It would be another 10 years before she was ordained elder.

Over the subsequent years I corresponded in long annual letters with a series of sponsors and/or other member of the (then) Board of Ministerial Training and Qualifications. ... When my studies, extended to doctoral work, caused my membership to lapse, Jim Corson resurrected my file, and I eventually applied for full membership in 1973. ...

I recall that as I walked across the stage in the UOP auditorium after being presented as a candidate for deacon's orders, Bishop Tippet remarked that his job was becoming more enjoyable. My mixed feelings about that remark, and the remark itself, were indicators of a new situation in which neither the new female candidates for conference membership nor the old male clergy guild knew quite how to act, and in which no one, male or female, could foresee what transformations of the church and the guild would accompany the entry of women into full partnership in the ordained ministry. I took the remark as a sign of welcome, however problematic the expression, and must say that once I was in seminary I met only

*encouragement from members of the Board – except in respect to my decision to study further instead of moving directly into "real" ministry.*

Dr. Bird keeps the letter she received in January, 1973, addressed to "Men on Special Appointment, California-Nevada Annual Conference". The letter stresses keeping "the brotherhood of the ministry alive and vital" - even for those on special appointment who sometimes feel "out of it" and alone. She circled the references to "men" and wrote in the margin: *I certainly do! [feel out of it and alone]. And I frankly do not see any place for myself in a fellowship so narrowly conceived.*

Upon completing her Ph.D. Dr. Bird began a teaching career.

*When I was invited to Perkins School of Theology in 1972, as the first woman on the faculty, the female student body was still quite small and facing quite hostile boards of ministry in the Texas and Louisiana conferences from which most came. At the time I went to Perkins, as Asst. Professor in a tenure track position, the entire university (SMU) was under a court order as a result of a class-action suit for under-representation of women, with the School of Theology targeted especially. The school continued under that court order (which required it to justify the hiring of any males until the percentage of women equaled the percentage with degrees in the field) for at least the next five years, during which time Perkins added 8 new male faculty while I remained the lone female.*

*It was not an easy time for women or for me at the school, though I had supportive colleagues and the encouragement of the small group of women students, who bonded...together and with me in a way that was lost in later years when women came to constitute a larger percentage of the student body (the first person to welcome me when I came to Dallas was Janice Riggle Huie, now bishop). In any case, as a stranger to the south, and its brand of Methodism, and as a woman in a conference that was not very supportive of women, I kept my membership in the California-Nevada Conference, because it was not only my "home", but because I was always encouraged and supported there.... I also cherished my relationship with the conference because it had a strong tradition of advocacy and support for racial and social justice (issues that for me were equally as important as gender*

*inclusiveness--and in fact formed the basis of my feminist commitments).*

*Because I have been outside the conference and because my ministry has been primarily one of teaching and scholarship for the church, I have not had the same experiences as women under appointment in pastoral ministry or interacting with other elders in the conference. My main frustrations and disappointments in relation to the conference have not been related to being a woman, but to being a biblical scholar. In contrast to my Presbyterian and Lutheran fellow students in graduate school and teachers in seminaries, I never received any financial aid or any encouragement to study or to publish from my denomination. My first book contract was solicited by an editor for Westminster Press, for a book on the Bible [ultimately entitled The Bible as the Church's Book] in a series on basic Christian doctrines--widely used for many years in Presbyterian and Reformed circles world-wide [making me well-known in South Africa and translated into Chinese], but virtually unknown to United Methodists. My experience has been that the United Methodist Church in general makes far less use of its scholars and seminary professors on theological issues relating to the church's life and ministry than many other denominations. It also has no consistent way of integrating theologians and theological faculty into its denominational life. I feel I have to validate my ministry by my social activism (no problem there for me), while my primary work as a scholar and teacher is treated as a personal interest rather than an essential and critical function of the church's ministry.*

Dr. Phyllis Bird's teaching career took her as Professor of Old Testament to the faculties of Drew University School of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, and Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. She served on the Translation Committee that produced the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

*I should add one postscript, on how I got to seminary in the first place--because no one had ever suggested it to me and it had never occurred to me to consider ordained ministry as a vocational option. Growing up in the conference I was active in the MYF and had dedicated my life to missionary service at an MYF institute--perhaps because I have always been attracted to international and cross-*

cultural experiences.... I had never considered parish ministry, although my home church from the time I was in high school (Alum Rock UMC in San Jose) had been started by a deaconess (Dorothy Gleason), who was in fact both preacher and pastor. I did not think of her as a "Rev.", but reflected the common perceptions of the time, that saw only men as "ministers." Feminist consciousness was a long time dawning...; it took not only experience, but also theological reflection and public debate to bring about the revolution that is still in progress.

It was at the Wesley Foundation at Berkeley under Bob Schlager that my theological interests ... were further stimulated and fed. When I was nominated during...my first year of graduate work [in sociology] for a Rockefeller Brothers Fellowship to try out seminary for a year, I was excited about the possibility. I imagined myself at Yale.... But I was turned down for the fellowship. At the interview..., I recall that Sherman Johnson asked me whether I "really wanted to study theology" or was "just theologically confused." I answered, truthfully, that I could not distinguish the two. I was a total novice in theology, intoxicated with my first encounter with the doctrine of grace, and hungry to learn more. But that did not satisfy the committee that I was a promising candidate for ordained ministry, the goal of the fellowships. So I took their decision as a higher judgment that theology and ordained ministry were not my vocation. Three years later, however, when I had been forced to interrupt my graduate studies to work for a year, I decided to indulge my interest in theology by spending a year in a seminary. ... My field work experience there converted me to a three-year degree and a path toward parish ministry. When I completed my B.D. (at the head of my class), I felt like sending a graduation announcement to the Rockefeller Brothers Fellowship committee. ...

I should add that many years later I found myself as a member of the Translation Committee that produced the NRSV, and of which Sherman Johnson was also a member. He was aged and ill by that time, and I never spoke to him of the interview.... But it was one more testimony to the hand of God working in ways that are often hidden to us. (One of my favorite hymns has always been, "God moves in a mysterious way"—for its wonderful images and allusions to OT texts, but also because its message has been confirmed in my life.)

## Roberta Bassett Corson

Roberta Bassett entered seminary as a single woman in 1966. She was certain of her call, but very uncertain of her future. Her first year at Pacific School of Religion proved to be daunting and dispiriting.

...I was one of six single women living on campus, one of two who were headed toward ordination (I believe the other eventually became a lawyer instead); the others were going for Christian Education and mission work. It was a lonely year. I knew no ordained women who could be role models, had few social connections, and was grieving the recent deaths of my father and brother. Carl and Glenda Thomas became tender friends and support. Eating together with the single men was often a nightmare; some saw me as fair game to tease and harass (invitations to the nude beach, a random proposal for marriage, and comments [about] what I was wearing.... One of the faculty members physically assaulted me in an attempted sexual encounter, from which I pulled away. With our contemporary sensitivity, these would be intolerable acts, but there was little support, no awareness, really no one to talk to, and I quietly avoided these contacts. ...

Bobbie's files contain a thick folder of articles about the "problems" ensuing if women became United Methodist ministers. Though a decade and a half had passed since the 1956 General Conference, one article in a United Methodist publication listed these eight problems:

1. A conference member is guaranteed an appointment, and churches will not accept women, so what happens?
2. A woman might become involved in family duties and be unable to carry the duties of the appointment.
3. If a woman minister is married, her husband would be a problem. It would not be good for him to do the housework and care for the children, not have a full time job himself.
4. A baby would make it difficult to carry on the work.
5. New minimal salaries and pension programs would have to be adopted for women.
6. If permitted, too many women would flock to conference membership.



7. Ordination of women is against the tradition of Methodism.
8. Church members prefer to have men call on them.

Typical headlines from church and secular publications included:

*"Do Women Make Good Ministers?"*

*"Women Chaplains Deliver Comfort"*

*"Lady Ministers take to Pulpits".*

Bobbie and Dick Corson were married in 1968 upon Dick's graduation from seminary. They engaged in team ministry in Bakersfield; Bobbie did not request and did not receive Conference minimum salary. When each received an appointment - Bobbie to a Japanese congregation and Dick to a Hispanic congregation - they negotiated a team ministry in both settings with Bobbie as lead pastor in one and Dick as lead pastor in the other.

*[A]t a district gathering...one of the pastors asked me about ordination. No one had ever really stopped to ask that, although I had thought a lot about it. I said that I wanted to start a family and didn't know how those would fit together. He replied, "If you start a family first, I predict that you won't go for ordination, but if you are ordained first, you can do both." That was in March, 1971.*

*... I applied for ordination as a deacon, put together the paperwork, met with the committee, and was ordained at Annual Conference that year. Glenda [Thomas] had done the ground work with the Cabinet and the Board the year before. ...*

*Dick and I continued to work together, both full time, after I was ordained, although I think I had a flexible appointment that allowed me to receive \$30/month for my reimbursement. We were serving people at the poverty level and our salary was just above the poverty level, and our life was very sweet there. I was not in ministry for compensation, but because it was my call. ... We wanted to worship and work together, and we discovered that we worked together somewhat seamlessly, without competition, and with shared visions. This was very good.*

The Judicial Council would later rule that Conferences could not suspend minimum salary requirements for clergy couples. Both must receive minimum salary.

*Our first child was born in 1972; I was ordained an elder in 1973, and our second child was born in 1974. ...*

*During the time in Bakersfield, I brought in little money (the \$150/month at St. Andrews replaced the \$30 at Bethany). But I worked very full time, and Dick and I learned how to be parents together, sharing many of the responsibilities. The ministries there allowed the flexibility I needed to work when the children were asleep, to have meetings in the parsonage with other parents and children, to be part of the family-oriented Hispanic culture and open our home to them as they did theirs to us. ... Many of these people had a third grade education, had grown up in the fields, and now worked either in agriculture or blue collar jobs. Children had children and families were connected. We were part of the families.*

*Other than constantly being introduced as "my minister's wife," what I most distinctly remember from this era was that one family left Bethany and never come back. When Dick went to check on them, they said that my skirts were too short. (We didn't wear robes). I was stunned and hurt, and they were never open to my attempts to resolve this break. ...*

*During our Bakersfield time, I made frequent bus trips to San Francisco to work on one or another connectional project. One of these projects was working with Jessie Todd and others on developing an integrated curriculum for the Sunday Schools of the conference. I had experienced a creative curriculum model on a trip to Chile, and she was working in the same area. ...*

*From 1976-1984, I served two terms on the Board of Ordained Ministry, which included two years as part of the Pastoral Care Committee with Don Kuhn and Bob Hawthorne. We worked to develop a chaplaincy for pastors of the Conference, and in doing this invited Louise Long in to share her expertise. Louise...was the chaplain at Napa State Hospital for the mentally ill. She could have been more of a role model for me, because I still longed to be a chaplain. However, she was a "harrumph" kind of woman, somewhat intimidating to me, very clear in her opinions, taking no guff from anyone, speaking her mind clearly, listening carefully and responding as she would. I always wondered, but never asked, how she felt about those of us who were now following behind her into ordination. ...*

*Because I was one of the early women in the second wave of ministry, I was asked to serve on*

many conference/district levels, and I accepted as many as I could. Partly this was to ensure that women were visible, and partly it was because I enjoyed the stimulation of ministry in the larger world. ...

I was also elected to Jurisdictional Conference in 1980. This was part of a convoluted political process led by some clergy men who thought I was the lesser of other (female) evils. I kept in touch with the other women and we worked together. They actually supported this candidacy and were pleased that I was elected. However, I always felt that it was a negative election.

[Eventually I came to feel] that I was filling an "equal opportunity" slot, and there was no end to the need. ...

Entering into (years of) long term, intensive analytic therapy, working with dreams, finding the right school of archetypal psychology, refinancing our home to afford three educations, [writing a Ph.D.] dissertation that addressed my unique questions, and having finally grown an open and flexible congregation who let me know that they value me [for] exactly who I am, has allowed me to clarify, train for, and pursue the uniqueness of my own call.

Dr. Roberta Corson will continue as a psychotherapist upon entering into retired relationship at this Annual Conference. She says, *I am doing exactly what I am called to do at this point in my ministry. I love the quiet centeredness of therapy, the containment of the office, the contact, the schedule.* ...

### Martha Rowlett (Arnott)

*As a teen-ager growing up in the Appalachian mountains of Virginia, I responded to a sense of call to what we called then "full-time Christian service." This was not clearly defined, I just knew that I wanted to work in and for the church vocationally. I assumed that this meant becoming a Director of Christian Education, because that is what women I knew did. ...*

*After college, I earned a Master's degree in Christian education at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. When I applied for the program, my mother suggested that I work toward ordination. I responded...with quick rejection and some laughter. I was just beginning to read Betty*

*Freidan and to feel the excitement of the Women's Liberation movement that hit the country about that time, but I was not ready for anything that radical.*

*I worked as a Director of Christian Education in churches in Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia before joining the Conference Staff in California-Nevada to do Christian education at the conference level. When my job was cut due to budget reductions in the Conference, I went back to seminary at Pacific School of Religion to complete the Master of Divinity degree.*

*...I had never met a woman pastor. The only ordained clergywoman I knew was Jessie Todd, and she worked in Christian education. Ordination did not fit in with my social conditioning about the role of women. I was a feminist, but not a pioneering feminist. The ministry in my mind was clearly a masculine role and only masculine women would do it. I was clear that I was a feminine feminist.*

*...The Bishop's Cabinet was concerned that fifteen years after full ministerial rights had been granted to women, only a trickle of applicants had taken advantage of the new status. In the spring of 1971, they sent Wilbur Choy, my District Superintendent, to PSR to invite me to be ordained and appointed to a church...that year. I had my eye on another interesting job, but it would not be open for another six months. After two years in school, my finances were depleted and I needed to eat. So, for that very untheological reason, I agreed to become an ordained clergywoman, feeling very strange about the whole matter. In five weeks, I became an ordained minister and on the first Sunday in July of 1971 I preached to a large congregation at First United Methodist Church in Palo Alto, my first appointment. It was not a happy experience. I had taken no courses in homiletics and this was a church used to outstanding preaching. I also felt the burden of being the first woman preacher almost everybody there had ever heard. In fact, that morning, I was the first woman preacher I had ever heard...*

*We all survived, but I felt a deep hunger for some female models in ministry. The adjustment was helped by the fact that part of my job on the staff was Christian education. But I was in the pulpit every six weeks, and led the congregation in the prayers in the worship service every week. That began my interest in prayer, which has resulted in three books published by UPPER ROOM BOOKS on the subject of prayer.*

*In the search for women models, I turned to*

*the early women in ministry in this conference. I interviewed those still living and read what I could find about those no longer living. I discovered some remarkable, amazing women and wrote about them in an article published in THE PACIFIC HISTORIAN magazine and presented at the Annual Conference as a skit [and later reproduced as "Women of the Ministry: California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church"]. These true pioneers were manna for my spirit, and I give thanks for them. ...*

*Over the years, the strangeness has melted away, and in the company of the wonderful group of clergywomen...I have come to feel more at home and comfortable in the role.*

*The early days were the hardest because I continued to feel the burden of making that important first impression, often looking out from the pulpit into stern or frowning faces.... I received a lot of attention from the press for a while and have a file of clippings showing me as this strange phenomenon - a woman minister. I had a few confrontations with biblical literalists who wanted me to know that I was going to hell for what I was doing. I had the stress of being the "first woman" to do things for which I would not otherwise have been invited. The Annual Conference elected me to be the head of the delegation to the General Conference of 1976. This was an election that no one intended to turn out that way - but I was elected and I served. ....*

*I have served as Associate Minister,...as co-pastor,...as Associate Conference Council Director in the California-Pacific Annual Conference, and for ten years as senior pastor of the Rolling Hills United Methodist Church in Rolling Hills Estates in the Long Beach District. During my pastorate at Rolling Hills, we built a new \$2 million sanctuary and office building complex and more than doubled both church attendance and the annual budget. This was a very happy time of my life.*

*In 1971 I was married to Dr. Robert Arnott, professor of Church Administration and Director of Field Education at Claremont School of Theology. His enthusiastic and knowledgeable support was an incredible source of strength for my ministry, especially for the years in local church pastorate. Clergywomen were not strange to him, but a delightful new dimension of the church's ministry. He also took great pleasure in being the clergy spouse and missed the congregation more than I did when I took family leave to care for him during his terminal illness. I retired a month before he died on*

*the thirtieth anniversary of my ordination.*

*In retirement, I still evoke surprised responses from people when I tell them that I am a retired United Methodist minister. There is usually a pause in the conversation while they take that in.*

*In 1986, I spoke at the Holston Annual Conference celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the 1956 General Conference vote. This was my home conference, and they invited me back to tell my story. I used as my text the story of Gamaliel from Acts. I identified with Gamaliel's response to the strange looking things that were happening after Pentecost. I said: The apostles were so successful in the proclamation of the Gospel, that the high priest and the Sadducees became extremely jealous of them and had them arrested and put in jail. Subsequently, they were brought before the Council to account for what they were doing. The members of the Council wanted to have the apostles put to death, but one of them, a Pharisee named Gamaliel cautioned his colleagues against hasty action, "Leave them alone," he said. "If what they have planned and done is of human origin, it will disappear. But if it comes from God, you could not possibly defeat them. You could find yourself fighting against God. So the Council set the apostles free and the church of Jesus Christ continued to grow."*

*I have approached my ministry in this spirit. It looked strange to me, but it felt as if it was God's call in my life. I have given it my best, and day by day have been watching to see if it appears to be from God or of human origins. From the day of my survival of that first sermon at Palo Alto, I have been aware that God is at work in this. ...*

*Twenty years ago I said to my Holston Conference friends: "The experience of thirty years is irrefutable. Women can deliver the goods... Not only is the basic job getting done where women are appointed, but as women operate out of women's experience, the ministry is being enriched and given new dimensions and new strengths. God is giving women the gifts and graces for ordained ministry. God is calling women into this ministry. In fact, I think God was doing this long before 1956. But now that the church has caught on, God is strengthening and expanding the total ministry of the church through its women clergy..." At the fifty year mark this confirmation of the wisdom of this decision is even more clear and cause for celebration. ...*

## Lynn Nell Rhodes

*I left California in 1966 and returned in 1983. I was ordained in the New England Conference as deacon in 1972 and elder in 1974....*

*I did attend PSR for two quarters in 1965-66. At that time there were about 5-6 women at PSR and we all lived in one house on Virginia Street. I had just graduated from Berkeley as a political science major and had never considered seminary until my final months of college. I was very active in the Wesley Foundation . . . . As the Free Speech Movement had begun, I was disillusioned about working for the government in international affairs. I met a woman who had just graduated from Union Theological Seminary in NYC and she suggested seminary as an option because she had a friend who worked for the church in Paris with international issues. It was the lure of Paris that drew me to seminary. I had no intention of being a pastor.*

*I decided to go to PSR to see if it might lead to ways to be involved in justice work and found PSR to be rather stifling. . . . Most of the women wore dresses and the majority were in the religious education program and I was in my blue jeans, long hair and guitar stage.*

*At that time we took tests to assess our psychological health and I was told that I tested more "masculine" than was normal for a female. Later I learned that almost all women who made it to graduate school tested more "masculine."*

*A friend of mine was going to Union and told me that it was different and that the students were interested in the same issues. When I told the administration that I was leaving and wanted my transcripts sent to Union, someone told me that I would not be accepted because women who changed seminaries were "suspect." It meant they had not found a husband at the first seminary. . . .*

*For me, the Wesley Foundation and Bob Cary's work were the most significant preparation for leadership. . . . I never met a woman pastor or a significant woman role model for working in the church while I was in California during my childhood, youth and college years. . . . When I returned to this Conference [as Associate Professor of Field Education at P.S.R.] in 1983, I found a very different situation. . . .*

## 1976- 1985

### 1976

Judith Ann Bither  
Victorine E. Armour Healy  
Jacqueline Meadows

### 1977

Virginia Florence Curtis  
Leontine T.C. Kelly (Virginia)  
Ok-Whan Kim (Korea Methodist Church)

### 1978

Karla Klinoff Bowman  
Betsy (Ellenburg) Schwarzentraub  
Madeline K. Elsea  
Gwendolyn Louise Pomeroy

### 1979

Janna Adamson  
Linda Rachel Berry (Northern Illinois)  
Linda Susan Garment (Detroit)  
Betty Strathman Pagett  
Kathleen Pope Ralston Kaplan

### 1980

Ronna Lynne Case  
Virginia Young Hilton  
Judith Leonard Jogis  
Joanne Marie Peterson  
Jane Elizabeth Schlager  
Christine Elaine Shiber

### 1981

Lauren Chaffee (West Pennsylvania)  
Pamela Dee Cummings  
Nadine Stark DeWitt  
Marilyn Edith Ericksen  
Denice Katherine Leslie  
Karen Campbell McClintock  
Theresa May Mason  
Marlene Jacobson Spilman  
Janna Tull Steed (New York)

### 1982

Constance Jones Butcher  
Dixie Jennings-Teats  
Mochi Lam  
Linda Lee Pickens-Jones (Pacific Southwest)  
Naomi P.F. Southard

Judith Kathryn Stone  
Ellen Elaine Rowan (Recognition of Orders)

1983

Janet Sue Everhart  
Leslie Duke Hall  
Linda Inlow  
Fleming Truesdale Kelley  
Evelyn Davis Kendall  
Eileen Harper Lindsay  
Odette Lockwood-Stewart (Pacific Southwest)  
Lee Ellen Morrison  
Ruth Vernice Otto  
Gerry Charlotte Phelps  
Linda Delain Wiberg  
Andrea Meek Winchester  
Nancy S. Yamasaki

1984

Eva Elizabeth Dickover Berger (Herschbach-Martin)  
Regina Harness Gaudet  
Beverly Shamana (Pacific Southwest)  
Kim Alice Smith

1985

Kathleen Fay La Point  
Margaret Covenant McNaught (South Indiana)  
Karen P. Oliveto (New York)  
Dorothy Mae Williams

*I was the "first woman" in all three churches I've served. In my first parish, the all-male ministerial association didn't know what to do with me. I wasn't asked to preach at the community-wide services until I'd been there four years!*  
(Rev. Gayle Pickrell)

On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1976) of full clergy rights for women, the California-Nevada Conference received three women into Full Connection. That almost doubled the number of women serving under pastoral appointment.

Of the three women granted full connection in 1976, two would serve as District Superintendents and two would chair a Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Jacquie Meadows served as Superintendent of the Fresno District. Judith Bither, chaired the Board of Ordained Ministry in the Alaska Provisional Conference. Vickie Healy begins her eighth year as Superintendent of the Fresno District in 2006,

having previously chaired the Board of Ordained Ministry in California-Nevada.

Virginia Curtis was the sole woman received into full connection in California-Nevada in 1977. That same year Leontine T.C. Kelly was ordained in Virginia. She would eventually come to California-Nevada as bishop. Ok-Whan Kim was ordained in 1977 in Korea and would ultimately come to serve in our Conference.

Four women were received into full connection in 1978: Karla Bowman, Betsy Ellenburg (Schwarzentraub), Madeline Elsea and Gwendolyn Pomeroy.

In 1979 there were three: Janna Adamson, Betty Strathman Pagett and Kathleen Pope Ralson Kaplan. Rachel Berry (Northern Illinois) and Susan Garment (Detroit) would later transfer their membership to California-Nevada.

1980 saw full connection for six female elders: Ronna Case, Virginia Hilton, Judith Jogis, Joanne Peterson, Jane Schlager, and Christine Shiber.

In 1983 women outnumbered men in the class of new elders for the first time.

## Clergywomen of Color in the California-Nevada Conference

Women of color often faced multiple obstacles, for some ethnic cultures were less accepting of women in authority than the United Methodist Church at large. This did not deter them from widening the narrow stream of women entering full connection in the 1980's.

Mochi Lam and Naomi Southard - two Asian-American women - were the first women of color to be received into full connection in California-Nevada in 1982. Naomi Southard would later serve as executive director of the National Federation of Asian American United Methodists.

Nancy Yamasaki (Japanese-American) was ordained in 1983. In 1985 Dorothy Williams became the first African-American woman to receive elder's orders and full connection in the California-Nevada Conference. One year prior to that our current Resident Bishop Beverly Shamana was ordained in the Pacific Southwest Conference.

Ok-Whan Kim was ordained in the Korea Methodist Church in 1977. She transferred to California-Nevada in 1990.

1982

Mochi Lam: first Chinese-American clergywoman  
Naomi Southard: first Japanese American  
clergywoman

1984

Leontine T.C. Kelly: consecrated as  
first African-American female bishop  
and assigned to California-Nevada Annual  
Conference

1985

Dorothy Williams: first African-American  
clergywoman

1986

Renae Extrum-Fernandez: first Chicana  
clergywoman

1992

'Ana Tiueti: first Tongan clergywoman

1993

Ruth Cortez: first Filipina clergywoman

2000

Yon-Sil Yu: first Korean-American clergywoman

## Mochi Lam

*My ministry was a bitter-sweet journey. To begin with, there were four strikes against me. First, I was a woman, a minority in the workforce. Second, being an Asian I became a minority among the minority. Thirdly, I was an overseas-born woman speaking with a "strange" accent. Fourthly, I was a single parent raising two early elementary school age children. ... [M]y primary goal was survival. What I called "strikes" became advantages at times. ... By God's grace I had a good ministry.*

## Allen Yan-Chamberlin

Allen Yan-Chamberlin was not the first Chinese-American clergywoman in our Conference, but her experience was similar.

*Walking toward the sanctuary on the first Sunday in my church, I was stopped by a gray-*

*haired patriarch of the congregation, audaciously asking what others were too polite to say, "Can you preach?"*

*"Can women preach?" is in fact a central question for both ethnic clergywomen and congregations. My church has been shaped by a strong cultural tradition that perceives women as persons who respond better than they initiate, who should be seen rather than heard, and who are passive rather than assertive. My congregation rarely assumes that a woman can...proclaim the Word of God. As a matter of fact, few persons have ever heard a woman preach. ...The most common feedback I've received is "You are exceptional," which implies that I have gradually earned the recognition of my ecclesiastical authority as they have experienced me as someone who can be trusted to lead them into liberation through God's Word.*

*Being an Asian American clergywoman serving in a cross-cultural and cross-racial church, preaching frequently brings to the surface issues about personal identity and the nature of faith. With minimal ethnic role models to look to, sometimes I wonder at my potency as a minister especially when I'm ill or depressed. ...*

*In many ways I have been pulled, stretched, and challenged. How to be sure my call is genuine; how to replenish the strong personal faith from the past by embracing new ways of understanding; how to relate to a...denomination and a dominant western culture; how to effectively work in a context which, though outwardly friendly, still gives daily reminders of its hesitance about, or even non-acceptance of, my gender, ethnicity and vocational choice.*

*My tenacious working and wrestling with these challenges have brought me a sense of clarity about what they are, and enhanced my sensitivity to the inner pains that bring forth growth. I must constantly remind myself that my call has to be originated from the heart in response to the will of God..., lest I react foolishly to any testing situation. ...There are times when God seems to be the only One who cares. ...*

## Ruth Ocera Cortez

*My call to the ordained ministry was revived after a hiatus of more than thirty years at the height of my experience of dislocation multi-dimensionally. My family was experiencing*

dislocation in health: My husband, who was an itinerant elder, was gravely sick. We came to this land for the umpteenth time, not to migrate but to get medical attention. The physical dislocation was aggravated by our leaving a very fulfilling ministry of being part of the prophetic voice and presence against the Marcos regime. Also we lost most of our family which caused emotional trauma to our children and larger family. The final and most painful experience of dislocation was Nael's (he was not quite 53 years old) death in 1987. Yet in the few months before his death, he blessed the revival of my call to the ministry. He who was conversant with the processes of the community of faith, reviewing, approving, and blessing the call - he served as Chair of the Board of Ministry in his Conference for the longest time - prepared me for what might come in the process of testing and serious conversations! Although I did not know it then, I now see Nael's blessing my call as a faint yet critical point of relocation in my faith and life journey.

My seminary training occurred concurrently with my serious encounter with the story and struggles of my people, the Filipinos in this land. Thus, when I was ordained...as the first Filipina elder in the 145 years history of the California-Nevada Annual Conference, I understood and lived out the important occasion, not just as a personal bio-datum, but as part of the historical reality of a marginalized community in both church and society. My ordination brought about a lot of celebrations in the Filipino-American community in the UMC and even beyond. The personal is social is communal.

In my fifteen years of effective...service and ministry in this Conference I was blessed by the companionship of my sisters in the ministry. It was a joy to serve as part of the leadership of the clergywomen's caucus in the 90's, yet from this vantage point, I could say now with honesty, that I felt in my heart of hearts a sense of dislocation in terms of my not being part of the history of the clergywomen from a longer period. Even when I was accepted by my sisters, I experienced the historical gap emotionally. I was still being "relocated." Thus, emotionally, I really was more "at home" with and in the midst of my primary community, who aside from my family and clan, constitutes the Filipino American church and faith communities across the land.

*A sense and reality of relocation became*

*more pronounced for me and my community in 1999 when Bishop Melvin Talbert invited me to serve in his Cabinet as District Superintendent of the Shasta District. By virtue of this appointment, I became the first District Superintendent from the Filipino American community to serve in that capacity in the Conference's more than one hundred fifty years of existence! ...I was also the first Filipina District Superintendent within the connection in this land. A shift in the leadership profile, if not the leadership paradigm, of the Conference has taken place. In my last years in the Superintendency, there were three ethnic District Superintendents (2 men and 1 woman) in the Cabinet of Bishop Shamana.*

*In one of my reflections with other District Superintendents across the connection, I shared with them the essential questions I had grappled with...: What does it mean to bring the insights and understanding of the margins to the center of leadership in the institutional church? And to make those elements integral to a new way of leading that accepts marginality as a way of authentic living and faithful discipleship? It is a serious faith question. It is the question of those who have been dislocated, but by God's grace and accompaniment are given new life in a new land in the long process of relocation. Thus, we can and will sing, thus, we can and will pray, and thus, and by God's grace, we can and will help lead.*

*The personal is social is communal.*

### **'Ana Moala Tiueti**

(remembered by Alice Ann Glenn)

'Ana Moala Tiueti, the first Tongan clergywoman in the California-Nevada Conference, heard a "double" call. She was called to ministry and she was called to help Tongans coming to the U.S. to adjust to a new culture and to a new Methodist system. ... 'Ana was born in 1953 in the island Kingdom of Tonga, the eldest of eight children of a minister of the Free Wesleyan Church. She graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1984 and intended to return to Tonga when she heard her call to help those of her people who were going to America. She received her M.Div. degree from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley in 1987 and was ordained elder in full connection in the California-Nevada Annual Conference in 1992.

'Ana Tiueti was a mentor to many Tongan candidates for ministry and was a valued spiritual

leader in that community and beyond. She presided over a chartering ceremony for First Tongan UMC in San Bruno in 1990 and became its pastor through 1997 when she was appointed to Hamilton UMC in San Francisco....

'Ana served on the Board of Ordained Ministry and its Probationers Committee where she helped non-Tongan colleagues understand Tongan culture and the different polity of the predominantly [Wesleyan] Methodist Tongan Islands. She died on November 28, 2003, from a rapidly spreading cancer.

Heilala Ahio was the first Tongan clergywoman who was part of a Tongan clergy couple. She and her husband, Kalatini Ahio, served a predominantly Anglo congregation in Ukiah. They experienced and shared the multiple stresses of a cross-cultural appointment. They now serve separate congregations on the San Francisco Peninsula. Their appointments are just a few miles apart, though in different districts.

### Dorothy Williams

Dorothy Williams, the first African-American clergywoman in full connection in the California-Nevada Conference was placed in a cross-racial appointment. When she sought insight and assistance from a member of the Board of Ordained Ministry, she was told, "Dorothy, you already know more than any of us because you are the first one there."

Unsatisfied by that, she composed a questionnaire and sent it off to black clergywomen across the connection, asking especially for feedback from African American clergywomen serving cross-racial appointments.

The responses were not surprising: fear of losing one's cultural identity, experiences of both racism and sexism, an absence of helpful resources on the subject, and the loneliness that comes from finding no-one in similar circumstances with whom to bond and share.

The majority of the cross-racial appointments were to marginal congregations already experiencing multiple problems of morale, finances, direction and mission. All the clergywomen who responded nevertheless affirmed the principle of "oneness", quoting John Wesley, "all the world is my parish," and Scripture, "one

body and one Spirit, one hope and one calling, one faith, one baptism, one God and Creator of all" and "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and we were made to drink of one Spirit." The Book of Discipline was also referenced: "Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, color or age..."

Dorothy Williams ultimately published her findings in The Journal of Women and Religion, Volume 9-10, with several pointed conclusions: there must be intentionality at the Conference level; don't make cross-racial or cross-cultural appointments until resources are available. One Conference placed two members of the Board of Ordained Ministry as mentors/support for any woman placed in a cross-racial appointment. Dorothy Williams also suggested a three to five year case study of someone in such an appointment, so as to harvest insights and wisdom. Support systems and spiritual retreats are essential.

### Bishop Leontine T.C. Kelly

Leontine T.C. Kelly made history when the Western Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church elected her the denomination's first African American woman bishop.

Her father and brother were Methodist ministers, as was her husband, James Kelly. Drawn to preaching, Leontine Kelly became a certified lay speaker and when her husband died in 1969, the congregation asked her to succeed him.

With daughter and mother in tow she eventually enrolled in seminary and earned her M.Div. degree in 1976. Ordination and full connection in the Virginia Conference followed the next year. She was 57 years old.

She served as pastor of Asbury-Church Hill United Methodist Church in Richmond, Virginia from 1977 to 1983, when she became Assistant General Secretary of Evangelism for the General Board of Discipleship in Nashville.

Bishop Kelly was the first woman to serve as episcopal leader for the California-Nevada Conference.

She brought a richness of spirit, passion and dedication. She preached often in local churches, ending her sermons by bursting into song, coming down from the chancel to walk the aisles singing



Methodist hymns from her vast store of memory. She regaled congregations with images of her brothers dangling her over a dark tunnel in the basement of their father's Cincinnati parsonage. It was a secret hiding place for escaping slaves on the Underground Railroad.

On at least one Good Friday afternoon Bishop Kelly was arrested protesting nuclear weapons development at the Livermore Radiation Lab. Cooler heads tried to talk her out of committing civil disobedience. She had not planned it but upon seeing all the people in the street she just joined in. Her spontaneous response to the moment, to the people, and to the issue was typical of Bishop Kelly!

Her retirement in 1998 has not ended her energetic campaigning for an end to nuclear arms, AIDS awareness, and wider acceptance of gays and lesbians in the church.

She presided over four California-Nevada Annual Conferences (1985-1988), shook up the Cabinet, knew her preachers by name, and represented United Methodism nationally and internationally.

She was featured in I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America. Her daughter, Angella P. Current, has recently published Breaking Barriers: An African American Family & the Methodist Story.

Bishop Kelly's election to the episcopacy was facilitated by concerted efforts on the part of women from California-Nevada. In February 1983 she was endorsed as an episcopal candidate by the more than 700 clergywomen gathered at Glorieta, New Mexico. She spoke at the 1984 California-Nevada Annual Conference and in that same year was nominated by the Virginia Conference as a potential candidate for bishop.

Meeting in Boise, Idaho, the Western Jurisdictional Conference received word that Leontine Kelly had removed her name from consideration in the episcopal balloting at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. Barbara Troxell immediately phoned her to ask permission to place her name in nomination in the Western Jurisdiction. Leontine Kelly hesitated. She was deeply disappointed that had not received the necessary support of her own Southeastern Jurisdiction. After a time of prayer she offered her name in nomination by the Western Jurisdiction where she was elected and consecrated bishop.

## Clergywomen Assume Broader Leadership

During this third decade of clergywomen's full connection, women caucused to insure that they were represented on Conference boards and agencies, in positions of authority, and as members of the delegations to General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference.

The clergywomen's caucus was small enough that meetings sometimes took place in the women's restroom at Annual Conference.

As a matter of principle California-Nevada clergywomen chose to throw their efforts behind different candidates each quadrennium. In this manner leadership was rotated and shared and no one woman became the spokesperson for the caucus in general.

Martha Rowlett headed the California-Nevada delegation to General Conference in 1976 and Glenda Thomas was elected to the Jurisdictional Conference delegation.

In 1980 Barbara Troxell was elected to the General Conference clergy delegation and Roberta Corson was elected to the Jurisdictional Conference delegation. Glenda Thomas served as a reserve member.

In 1984 Betty Strathman Pagett was elected to the General Conference delegation. Barbara Troxell and Glenda Thomas were elected to the Jurisdictional Conference delegation. Kathleen Ralston was a reserve.

Barbara Troxell was appointed Associate Conference Council Director in 1976 and joined the Cabinet in 1978, serving as Golden Gate District Superintendent until 1984.

Glenda Thomas was appointed Central (Delta) District Superintendent in 1984, serving until 1990.

California-Nevada clergywomen hosted the 1985 Western Jurisdictional Clergywomen's Consultation. Kim Smith and Kathy La Point-Collup were co-chairs of the event. Andrea Meek Winchester coordinated a childcare program, after San Damiano (Roman Catholic) Retreat Center was convinced to allow children's presence.

The first national Clergywomen's Consultation was held in Nashville in 1976. It was attended by Martha Rowlett, Roberta Corson,

Phyllis Bird, Glenda Thomas, Judith Bither-Terry, Betty Strathman-Pagett, Barbara Troxell, Jacquie Meadows, Louise Long and Vickie Armour-Healy. The California-Nevada delegation led the closing Eucharistic celebration.

The Consultation addressed issues of single women as clergy, ministers' husbands, building support systems, feminist theology, ministers who are mothers, lay/clergy women's relationships and breaking hierarchical patterns in the Church. Sixty percent of the clergywomen across United Methodism attended. Nationally known speaker Letty Russell predicted that the ministry would quickly become "feminized," with lower compensation and lower respect. A final resolution called for the election of at least one female bishop in each jurisdiction during the next round of Jurisdictional Conferences.

Clergywomen struggled with contradictions in their status. They needed to caucus and "politick" to gain access to power. Yet they were committed to eliminating, or at least challenging hierarchical relationships. Some chose to work from within and some from outside the existing system of superintendency, General and Jurisdictional Conference delegations, and positions on boards and agencies.

Wendy Pomeroy analyzed clergywomen's compensation and documented the lower pay and lesser appointments that were consistently offered women.

Conference and congregations were encouraged to adopt inclusive language in hymns, prayers, proclamations and conversations.

Norm Mowry was not the only male pastor who remembers referring to "the chairman," only to hear an indignant voice from the back of the room: "Chairperson, please!"

The appointment of a woman pastor was newsworthy in almost every town and city where it took place across the Conference. Many of the newspaper articles gave clergywomen an opportunity to raise significant issues of gender equality and gender awareness.

Local ministerial associations were frequently troublesome. Other denominations were most often represented by men. Joanne Peterson tells of a meeting of the Monterey Diocese's Ecumenical Committee to discuss plans for a possible visit to the area by the Pope. The

committee consisted of three men and Joanne. While she was out of the room briefly, the men agreed to hold their next meeting on the golf course. She explained that she didn't play golf and one of the men said she could come along as caddy!

Clergywomen's gatherings were often held in homes. Sharing and mutual support were made a substantive part of the gatherings. In 1979 the clergywomen of the Conference met at Karen McClintock's home, bringing sleeping bags to overnight on the living room floor. They discussed compensation, appointments, General Conference legislation and representation in the "power structure." But topping the agenda was the need to know one another and to support one another. This has remained a consistent and persistent issue.

## Denice Leslie

*My first year in seminary at PSR (1974) women were 50% of the entering class.... We were like sand dollars stranded on the shoreline--so many of us the faculty couldn't possibly throw us all back--and some of them dearly desired to do just that. Others like Charles McCoy and Bob Leslie were very supportive.*

*I remember going out to my first [interview] as an intern and having the committee say to me, "You're married? So what happens if you get pregnant?" I assured them that wouldn't happen. They looked at each other and paused and then asked again--and again, until I finally realized that my generation had the benefit of birth control in a way that previous generations had not.*

*I remember [bringing] our first child, Ian, [to] the floor of annual conference along with Karen McClintock and her daughter Megan.*

*I remember standing in the back of the executive session with Rachel Berry as we nursed our babies. There was no child care at annual conference. ...*

*I remember Barbara Troxell telling me and Karen ... that we would have to pick ourselves up by our bootstraps if we wanted childcare at Annual Conference. No one would do it for us. So we did. With the help of COSROW [we] began a parent cooperative childcare on site that first year for infants and preschoolers with the long range goal of expanding it to what it is today: Infant care through*

high school programs for children and youth at annual conference. As I served on COSROW we introduced childcare legislation which was passed and provided childcare on site for annual conference and for what was then pastors school. I recall seeking the support for childcare from some of the male "Redwoods" of the annual conference at that time and being rebuffed much to my very great surprise--and much to the benefit of my gender education....

I remember deciding not to go to a clergy women's retreat because there was no childcare and I was nursing. Encouraged to come by a clergy sister, I [went] only to have the speaker...tell me to remove my child (who could sit through church at the age of 3).... We were divided among ourselves on this issue--it was difficult. We were all very unsure--insecure about our role, about our futures, about our ability to be taken seriously....

I remember caucusing with the women clergy at annual conference to elect Bishop Kelly. We made history--and it was exhilarating!

I remember serving as a clergy couple and having someone tell me...how nice it was I was supporting my husband and [then] in later years telling me how much they would miss me as their pastor. I remember serving the St Helena congregation and how surprised I was to learn they had had a woman local pastor serve that congregation some 25 years earlier.

### Jacquie Meadows

Jacquie Meadows was the third clergywoman to serve as District Superintendent in California-Nevada. In retirement she serves the Yerington (Nevada) UMC and teaches at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno.

I entered PSR in 1972 to obtain my M.Div., already having received a Masters in Arts in Christian Education from PSR in 1961. I was a single parent of four, working 30 hours/week as I completed my degree. During my appointment to St. Paul's UMC in South San Francisco there were five clergy women who met on occasion for support: Glenda Thomas, Barbara Troxell, Martha Rowlett, Roberta Corson and me. (It is a sign of the times that I am now serving [a church] which has already had two women clergy, Karla Bowman and Janna Adamson). ...I was the first woman at St. Paul's

UMC in South San Francisco, Central UMC in Sacramento, First UMC in Napa, and then Fresno District Superintendent....

In the congregation at Central UMC, Sacramento there was a man named Johnny Walter. He always wore a red leisure suit. On my third Sunday, July 1979, Johnny followed me down the hall saying "I don't believe a woman can do a man's job but at least you are friendly." I replied, "Johnny, I appreciate you telling what you think; I can deal with such openness, so thanks for being honest with me." Through the years we would banter and tease back and forth. Each time I performed a memorial service he would say, "Jacquie, you really did not write that about the deceased did you?" I said, "Oh yes, Johnny, I did." That went on for several years, until one day he said to me, "Jacquie, will you do my service when I die?" ... One summer while I was on vacation four people in the congregation died. One of them was Johnny. I came home to do his service and bury him in his red leisure suit. ... Such change of attitude toward women pastors in the last 50 years. ...

The issues that preoccupied the "women pioneers" in this annual conference - such as inclusive language, God's name, women's roles and leadership - do not have the same importance now. We are a diverse group in terms of theology and ethnicity. That is to be celebrated.

### Kathy La Point-Collup

In 1972, I was 15 years old: Clarence Darrow was my hero...I planned to be a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union when "I grew up"...I was an active member of the First UMC of Napa...I attended my first Annual Conference Session as Youth Delegate...I fell in love with the University of the Pacific and decided that's where I wanted to go to college...I witnessed Glenda Thomas being received into full membership and ordained elder at the Saturday night service at Central UMC in Stockton. ... I believed, no I knew because of my grandmother, that women could do and be anything they wanted—they just had to work harder at it because the bar was much higher for women...I valued the guidance and support of the pastors our church had had or did have: Don Baldwin, Franklin Scott, Gerry Lowe. (Later during college I developed supportive relationships with Bill McCord, Bill Dew and Bob Moon).

*The arrival of three interns, two of whom were women, at my church created quite an impact. ...[After witnessing Denice Leslie and Wendy Pomeroy engaging in ministry], laity in my church begin saying things to me like "Law is a great field, but have you thought of entering the ministry?" ...*

*...In 1979, I was off to seminary at Drew University School of Theology in Madison, New Jersey. ...As a District Superintendent, Barbara Troxell visited the California-Nevada students at Drew twice.... Her first visit created quite a stir among both the faculty and students—most had never met a female DS before! And for those women who were coming from conferences where there were very few or no clergywomen, her visits were very encouraging. ...*

*My [second interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry] was in June, the day before the Annual Conference Session began. ... The interview was a disaster. My interview team was entirely male. The things that happened during it were quite painful. Today I would respond much differently but as a candidate I felt that I had very little power or authority. Looking back on it I think it would make great material for a Saturday Night Live skit entitled Well Intentioned Men Behaving Cluelessly. ...After a good cry, I called Barbara Troxell and told her about some of the patronizing things that had been done and said during the interview. She and James McCray brainstormed—out of that experience it was decided that whenever women candidates were being interviewed there would be at least one woman Board member present (not an easy decision as the Board didn't have many women at that time). Since Bobbie Corson was the only woman serving on this sub-committee, she was present at my next interview and what a difference that made!*

*After receiving Probationary Membership and Deacon's Orders, I continued to encounter "unthinking" behavior on the part of some of the men in the ordination process. For example, one of my advisors wanted me to come down and spend a couple of days with him so we could get better acquainted. ... A variety of these "unthinking" experiences happened, so much so, that my DS, Glenda Thomas, finally [intervened].*

*Although Louise Long, Jessie Todd and Eva Maxwell were our first three women received into full membership, I have always thought of Barbara Troxell, Glenda Thomas and Bobbie Corson as the giant three who paved the way for many women who followed them into ordained ministry.*

## 1986-1995

### 1986

Ardith Allread  
Mary Elyn Bahlert  
Renae Extrum-Fernandez  
Linda May Ford  
E. Myrna Bernadel-Huey (Eastern Pennsylvania)  
Nina Olmedo Jaquenod (recognition of orders)  
Carol Louise Matthews  
Virginia Miller Pearson  
Gayle Sweet Pickrell  
Kristin L. Sachen  
Florence Faith Whitmore

### 1987

Pamela J. Abbey  
Carol Betz-Schmidt (Carter)  
Nancy Danson (Oklahoma)  
Linda Loessberg-Zahl  
Norma Salinas

### 1988

Pamela G. Coy (Coy-Armantrout)  
Ellen S. Gariaeff  
Sandy Liddell  
Karen McNeill  
Ruth Rambo-Brown

### 1989

Donna Fado Ivery  
Lorraine McNeal  
Susan Elizabeth Meikle (Elizabeth Kennedy)  
Catharine Marie Morris  
Lori Best Sawdon

### 1990

Wendy Fossgreen (Weller)  
Lisa Nordlander  
Holly Robinson (Hess)  
Audrey Ward

### 1991

Stephanie Bush  
Katherine Everett  
Rebecca Irelan (Oregon-Idaho)  
Cheri Pierre (Northern Illinois)

## 1992

Judy Currier  
Anne Dilenschneider  
Mariellen Sawada (Sawada Yoshino)  
Ana Tiueti

## 1993

Shirley Janice Brim  
Ruth Cortez  
Karen Darling  
Sharon Delgado  
Sandra Exelby  
Joanne Rannells  
Allen Yan (Yan-Chamberlin)

## 1994

Amelia Chua  
Sherron E. Courneen  
Mary Parker-Eves  
Marilyn Shaffer Ray

## 1995

Linda Marie Kelly  
Susan Kemper  
Judith Shook (Southwest Texas)  
Margo Tenold

*"O, I'm steppin' out, steppin' out on the promises.  
O, I'm steppin' out, steppin' out all the way.  
O, I'm steppin' out, steppin' out on the promises.  
I'm living tomorrow today."  
(Susan R. Beehler, published by The General Board of Discipleship)*

In 1988 Glenda Thomas and Janet Everhart were elected to the California-Nevada General Conference delegation. Naomi Southard and Virginia Hilton were elected to the Jurisdictional Conference delegation. These four (of fourteen total) represented nearly 30% of the delegation. Linda Inlow was a clergy reserve delegate.

In 1992 Jacquie Meadows headed the clergy delegation and was joined by Naomi Southard and Linda Wiberg. These three (of seven) constituted more than 40% of the California-Nevada clergy delegation at General Conference. Nadine DeWitt was elected to the Jurisdictional delegation.

Jacquie Meadows was appointed Fresno District Superintendent in 1990 and served until 1994.

Nadine DeWitt was appointed Bay View District Superintendent in 1991 and served until 1997. This marked the first time two women served on the cabinet simultaneously.

In 1992 Linda Wiberg was appointed Associate Conference Council Director.

Ardith Allread was appointed San Jose District Superintendent in 1994, serving a total of eight years until 2002.

Conference clergywomen often caucused at Pastor's School to brainstorm issues they were facing. The minutes of one such gathering during this period identified:

- Subtle and blatant sexism
- Feminization of the Church (lowering of salaries, balance of female/male models, dumping as in "let the women do it")
- how to support new women in ministry
- sexual harassment
- multiple staff relationships
- well-being of self and others
- reproductive rights: the moral dilemma
- feminist theology and tolerance of diverse thoughts
- non-traditional family structures
- appointment making (how to break out of the "women circuits")
- power & authority
- pressure to do better than men
- Good Old Girls network (difficulty finding consensus among women)
- family issues
- support systems
- how to move beyond caucus politics
- health insurance, family/clergy couples
- power harassment
- pioneer in appointment
- homophobia
- finding balance in our lives
- attrition rate
- clergy morale
- Ministerial Associations
- maternal projection

A major issue of the time was clergy sexual misconduct. Kristin Sachse, during her four years as chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, enlisted the energies of many women and men in the effort to define Conference policies and then disseminate them in a way that educated all the clergy.

Churches too, especially Staff Parish Relations Committees, had to be informed and trained.

Virginia Pearson

### Pam Abbey

Pam Abbey was appointed as associate to Asbury UMC in Livermore in 1984. As with most of the clergywomen she had to overcome initial resistance but was accepted and appreciated once parishioners came to know her.

*...Overall, it went fairly well. I do remember one of the women, who became a good friend and supporter, telling me later that when she first heard a woman was coming, "my stomach turned"....Dick Ernst was the senior pastor and wonderful to work with. One thing we both heard was how much people liked having communion served by the two of us. At some level, we must have become 'mom and dad'.*

*A young man there, very conservative, told me that he had no problem with me because, "You don't have an axe to grind, like the other women ministers I've met." I pointed out that I didn't have to grind the axe because some other women had already done it....*

*Quincy UMC was fun. [District Superintendent] Don Jordan liked to have 'potluck interviews' when he took in a new pastor, so I had dinner with the SPRC before we got to the actual conversation. As we ended the interview later, one of the women said, "I did NOT want a woman pastor when I came tonight, but I think you are just perfect for us!"*

*...One active woman in the church told me a few months after my arrival that someone had questioned receiving a woman pastor. She just looked at them and asked, "Didn't you pray for God to send us the right pastor?" "Yes," that person replied. "Well, don't you trust God?" End of conversation. I had a great time in Quincy, and that church has been served by women ever since.*

*Overall, I haven't paid too much attention to the fact that I'm female. I've found that although people often opposed women in the abstract, when one actually showed up and had a face and a personality, they came around pretty fast! Within the UMC, very few issues have come up because of my gender. But I am not so naive as to think that everyone has had that experience. Or that I could have had that experience if a lot of brave women and men hadn't paved the way.*

*...I attended Sunday School as a child, was a leader in the Methodist Youth Fellowship, elected to serve on the Official Board as a teen-ager and always went to church summer camp. ... I saw lots of women in church, I helped my mother as she hosted and led her circle of the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS), I helped my older sister as she took attendance and offerings at Sunday School, but I never saw a woman preach or lead worship as a child. I would never dream of becoming a pastor.*

*Growing up in the San Leandro Methodist Church, part of the church staff was deaconess Eleanor Dalby (later Knudsen). Although not ordained, she served as an associate pastor in many respects. ...*

*As a high school student I became a member of Life Service Fellowship (led by Willard Rand). ... LSF was an organization of high school and college youth who wanted to have a vocation in the church (or, in today's vernacular were called to serve in the church organization). ... There were some female members, although most of the members were males. The guys wanted (mostly) to be preacher/pastors, but the girls were in a quandary as to what to do within the church structure. ...*

*While a student at Cal and a part of Trinity UMC, I met Georgia Harkness (who worshiped there) and Martha Rowlett, a student at PSR at the time. I became aware that then (early 1960s) there were some female students in seminary (such as Glenda Thomas and Jacquie Meadows) but I thought of them as exotic and daring—true pioneers. My friend at Wesley Foundation, Lynn Rhodes, went on to seminary, but I didn't know where she went and I lost track of her for many years. Twenty years later (1982), when I was a student at PSR, Lynn came to Berkeley to be on the faculty and to direct the Field Education department at PSR; she became my faculty advisor.*

*The first woman I saw in the pulpit of a church in the California-Nevada Conference was Alma Foster, pastor in Riverbend (Kingsburg). ...Alma was a licensed local pastor. She took over the leadership of the church after the death of her husband, D.L. Foster in 1976. She served the church there until 1994.....*

*It was at Annual Conference in 1981 when*

*Bob Moon preached at the Ordination service that I first imagined myself on the stage, being ordained. While working on staff as the Christian Education Director at St. Mark's I had attended the Multi-Staff Conference at Asilomar in 1980, and felt a great unrest or stirring of my soul as I tried to decipher what God had in store for me....*

*I was working at St. Mark's UMC in Sacramento as the Director of Christian Education when Theresa Mason came on staff as the Associate Pastor. Through Theresa I became better acquainted with Jacquie Meadows and Glenda Thomas (both serving churches in Sacramento at the time). It was in meeting and knowing these women in ministry that I decided that the old, somewhat faint call to ministry that I had heard in high school was still alive and well and I enrolled in PSR in fall of 1981. ...When I told Larry Gilmore that I wasn't ever going to preach, he laughed. His laughter has resonated and mocked me throughout my more than twenty years in the pulpit!*

*While a student at PSR, I chose to do my Field Education with Jacquie Meadows at Central UMC in Sacramento so I could see how a woman does ministry as a solo pastor. I worked with her (15-20 hrs. per week) for two years (and preached quite often, finding that I actually enjoyed it!). While I was interning with her, she invited me to join her for the annual Clergywomen's lunch at Annual Conference in 1983 (San Jose). All the clergywomen in the conference (plus a few like me who were not yet) met in Marley Spilman's living room!*

*...I remember how surprised we were with the difference in style and approach when Leontine Kelly came to be our Bishop. She had only been "on the job" for a couple of weeks when our [Annual Conference] task force met with her to get our marching orders... To our surprise, Bishop Kelly didn't have predetermined concepts...but she wanted our input and ideas. I remember her picking up a baby brought to the meeting (child of Regina Gaudet, I believe) and, while pacing the room with a baby in her arms declared that now things felt normal and we could proceed....*

*I graduated from PSR in May of 1984 and [was] appointed to Roseville UMC where I would be the first woman pastor in their experience. I met with resistance and objections, but was determined to win over my enemies if possible and to prove that I could do the job as well as a man! After six years, I left with a strong corps of supporters that included*

*some of those early nay-sayers.*

*... [W]e saw a steady increase in the numbers of clergywomen in the Conference and in the districts. The clergywomen of the district used to meet regularly, but gradually that need/desire seemed to wane and meetings were less frequent.*

*When I was appointed to Napa UMC (1990), I followed Jacquie Meadows, the first time that had happened (woman following woman) in a church in our Conference. During the 15 years I was in Napa, I had four associates, all women. I also supervised four PSR field education students, three of whom were women. When Linda Dew-Hiersoux and I were pastors in Napa (1994-2000) we were the first and only church staffed by two clergywomen.*

*I am still in awe...of those early women in ministry—the pioneers. I lacked the vision, the courage and the commitment to buck the system and to be one of the first ordained women in the church. I am, however, inordinately proud to join that great procession....*

## **Ruth Rambo-Brown**

*I went to seminary at the age of 51. Therefore, I relate to 3 groups of clergy. First, to the women in my age range, who are mothers and grandmothers, as I am. Many of them, however, have been in ministry for years and have an abundance of knowledge of the United Methodist Church. They [were] leaders in the church before I entered a United Methodist Church. ... I am at home with the liberal theology of this group.*

*The second group is the younger clergy with whom I have attended seminary [and the ordination process]. When they think "liberal" they seem to add "tired liberal" to their understanding. I enjoy the challenge of that.*

*At seminary I soon found support and social life with several middle-aged women who, as I did, unbursed their call to ministry as they did their inner work...after having been divorced. We had many years of pew sitting which I believe gave us a richness and practicality.... We were single parents and supported each other in that.*

*One professor approached a couple of us one day asking for input. He observed that those of us middle-aged students really "got it" by the quality of our contribution to class discussions. But when it came to tests, we did not shine. ... We said*

*that instant recall is a gift which seems to disappear with aging. ... From then on he gave the option of doing a take home test instead. Our GPAs recovered.*

*My first appointment was to Potter Valley in 1984 (till 1989). My predecessor was a woman, Kim Smith. The SPRC asked for a woman to be appointed when Kim left. Earlier, Vickie Armour Healy was pastor during her last year in seminary. Both of these predecessors were held in high regard so I did not have to deal with acute sexism. ...*

*...Barbara Troxell was leading workshops on Creative Authority in Ministry. While she did not focus on middle-age women coming into ministry, I believe we were the ones who needed it most. She wrote, "I am concerned about the ways in which we receive, accept, exaggerate, flatten, exploit, abdicate, reflect, assume authority – the authority with which each of us has been personally endowed and/or officially has been bestowed."*

*I remember being at the local Rural Health Clinic. I was on the Board and I got permission to print the Sunday bulletin and newsletter on their copy machine for a fee. I was chatting with staff while the bulletin ran and a woman in the waiting room asked if I was the Methodist Church secretary and I said "No, I am the pastor." I asked if she was the new nurse. She said, "No, I am a retired doctor." We laughed and spent some good times together after that. ...*

Loneliness and isolation were still experienced by many women in ministry. But women sought each other out and intentionally created opportunities for "connection" and support. Though many were still the "first clergy woman" in their particular appointment there were now clergywomen from other denominations serving in their communities, and sometimes other United Methodist colleagues.

### Kristin Sachen

This is taken from an article in "Voices and Silences," the Clergy-Diaconal Women in Ministry Association's newsletter:

*When I came to Wesley UMC in Palo Alto... I was delighted to find Gayle Pickrell was appointed to St. Andrews UMC at the same time. Two of us women, about 2 miles apart! I remember our first*

*lunch together at an outdoor café as we discussed the newness of our appointments ... The next summer we welcomed Renae Extrum-Fernandez at her home where she was in bed rest awaiting the birth of her second daughter. We brought sandwiches and suggestions about the best places in Palo Alto. Another summer brought Mariellen Sawada to Aldersgate UMC, and our circle grew. Last summer Susan Kemper arrived in Mountain View.*

*Together, with the exact configuration changing each time we met, we ate, talked, laughed, shared the hard parts and the celebrations. We worked on some joint ministries, mulled over preaching themes, challenged and soothed ourselves. And sometimes we played.*

*Last fall Gayle called us together to help with the planning of the clergy and diaconal women's retreat. She made a wonderful lunch and we sat in her open and airy home and made our plans. We were struck by how renewing hospitality was, and how much fun it was to spend a long period of time over a table with fresh flowers, talking about the things we enjoyed.*

*[Other gatherings were deliberately planned "out of the office" - at a local hot-tub place, a tea-house, a quaint little restaurant "with uneven floors" and a fire in the fireplace, where "pots of tea were ordered all around..."]*

*I'm not sure it matters so much what we do together, as much as the quality of hospitality when we do it. Even fun things can be a hassle if we aren't open to one another. But the willingness to linger, and the willingness to listen to ourselves and each other - [these] create the possibility for renewal each time we meet.*

## 1996-2005

### 1996

Linda Dew-Hiersoux  
Cindy Kay Eucalyptus (Northern New Jersey)  
Aniko Olah  
Kristie Olah  
Janette Saavedra  
Carole Vincent

### 1997

Mary Beck  
Diana Marie Bohn



Dawn Boyd  
Debra Brady  
Alice Ann Glenn  
Becky Goodwin  
Deborah V. Grundman  
Jody Hanna Kranz  
Barbara Smith  
Dorothy Straks  
Patricia Spooner-Walther  
Donna J. Wood

**1998**

Donna Morrow DeCamp  
Alexis Easton  
Cheryl Ann Garlick  
Hope Kawashima  
Lila Lopez-Karu  
Kathleen O'Leary  
Judith Pruess-Mellow  
Linda Snyder  
Kristin G. Stoneking (Kansas East)  
Donna VanMaanen (Iowa)

**1999**

Anne Lau Choy  
Janice Leota Dahl  
Nadine Graham  
Laura Heffernan  
Nancy Butters Landauer  
Netter Mitchell  
Judith Robbins  
Kathleen Smith  
Karen Watson  
Deborah Victoria Weatherspoon (Florida)

**2000**

Lillian D. Baker-Holleman  
Jola Bortner  
I Mei Chen  
Ardyss Golden  
JoAnn Juniel (Recognition of Orders)  
Lisa Warner-Carey  
Yon-Sil Yu

**2001**

Gaye Benson  
Elizabeth Brick  
Sandra Hammett  
Mary Maaga  
Kathi McShane

**2002**

Dorothy Ella Baker  
Christine Banfill  
Lois Black  
Laurie McHugh  
Alice Oberg  
Tarah Trueblood  
Kimberly Willis

**2003**

Heilala Ahio  
Billye Austin  
Charlotte Bear  
Carole Bergman  
Toni Hartman  
Sarah Hubinsky (Phelps)  
Kelly Love  
Janet Sue Mueller  
Karen Paulsen  
Norma Jean Powell  
Linda Prendergast  
Susan Grace Smith  
Tempe Robinson Wennerholm

**2004**

Pam Fine  
Sharalyn Hamilton  
Barbara Horikoshi-Firebaugh  
Lizabeth Klein  
Pam Kurtz  
Carol Layton  
Robin Mathews-Johnson  
Gretchen Craig Vandenberg

**2005**

Alison Elizabeth Berry  
Sun Hee Kim  
Shirley K. Macemon  
Delores Tibbs

*"Some Biblical images came to mind as we wrestled with ways to orchestrate our celebration of this [40<sup>th</sup>, 1996] anniversary. The 40 years of wandering in the wilderness certainly struck a chord with many, however, we were all in agreement that though the Israelites reached the Promised Land after 40 years – we have not!*

*(Diana Marie Bohn, deacon in full connection, writing in "Voices and Silences" in 1996)*

In 1996 Renae Extrum-Fernandez and Linda Wiberg were elected to the General Conference delegation. Ardith Allread and Nadine DeWitt were elected to the Jurisdictional delegation. Madeline Elsea was an elected reserve delegate. Renae's husband, Paul Extrum-Fernandez, was elected as a lay delegate to General Conference that same year.

In 2000 half the California-Nevada clergy delegation to General Conference were women. They were Mariellen Sawada (heading the delegation), Renae Extrum-Fernandez, and Ardith Allread. Two were women of color (Japanese-American and Chicana). Alice Ann Glenn and Karen Oliveto were elected to the Jurisdictional Conference delegation. Alice Ann Glenn was the first ordained deacon to be elected as a clergy delegate from California-Nevada. Linda Wiberg was elected reserve delegate.

In 2004 Renae Extrum-Fernandez and Karen Oliveto were elected to the General Conference delegation. Vickie Armour Healy and Odette Lockwood-Stewart were elected delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference. Alice Ann Glenn and Gaye Benson were elected reserves.

Ruth Cortez was appointed Shasta District Superintendent in 1999. She was the first woman of color to serve as Superintendent. She retired in 2005.

Vickie Healy was appointed Fresno District Superintendent in 1999. She will serve her eighth year as Superintendent beginning July 1, 2006.

Jane Schlager was appointed Golden Gate District Superintendent in 2001 and she continues on the cabinet.

Linda Wiberg has served as Conference Director of Connectional Ministries since 1999.

In 1999 Kristin Sachse became Assistant General Secretary for Program and Emergency Services, International for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief).

Odette Lockwood-Stewart was elected chairperson of the Order of Elders in 2002.

Diana Bohn was the first chairperson of the Order of Deacons. She was succeeded by Jody Hanna Kranz. The current chairperson is Dorothy Straks.

Betsy Schwartztraub is Director of Stewardship Development for the United Methodist Foundation.

Beverly Shamana was elected and consecrated Bishop by the Western Jurisdiction in 2000. She has been Resident Bishop in the San

Francisco Area since that time.

Bishop Shamana's initial degrees were in choral music and music education. She brings a deep interest in art. She was a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences prior to her consecration as bishop.

Bishop Shamana is president of the General Board of Church and Society, the current president of the College of Bishops of the Western Jurisdiction and a member of the Connectional Table. She served on the Council of Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty. She made an Episcopal visit to Africa and preached by invitation at Africa University in Zimbabwe as well as at the West Angola Annual Conference. She was a member of the Council of Bishops' peace delegation to Pakistan and the Middle East in February 2002.

## The Order of Deacons

For several decades women and men seeking ordination as elders were first ordained as transitional deacons. This was accompanied by "trial" or "probationary" annual conference membership.

The 1996 General Conference passed sweeping legislation abolishing the category of transitional deacons and establishing the Order of Deacons. Deacons are ordained clergy and they serve in full connection.

The roles of elders and deacons are in flux. Elders "preach and teach the Word of God, administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and order the life of the Church for mission and ministry." Deacons "lead the Church in relating the gathered life of Christians to their ministries in the world." Deacons "give leadership in the Church's life: in the teaching and proclamation of the Word; in worship, and in assisting the elders in the administration of the sacraments..., in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead...."

## Alice Ann Glenn

*There have always been women with a call to ministry that is not to the preaching or worship-centric ministry. Some of these women, even after ordination was an option, chose to be consecrated lay professionals. Most of these women were specialists in a field such as Christian education,*

youth work, community worker, music, hospital or other UMC agency administrators. Most lay professionals [working on church staffs] were also certified by the UMC in their area of specialty, and had to have that certification reviewed and renewed annually.

In 1976 the title diaconal minister became part of our ordering of ministry and any lay professional who wished to, could transition to that office in 1977. Diaconals served in areas of love, justice and service [corresponding to elders serving in areas of Word, sacrament and order.] At the time the office of diaconal minister was established, the denomination was in the midst of a...long "Study of Ministry"...

During the 1996 General Conference the office of full connection deacon came into being, and the transitional deacon that was part of the process of becoming a full connection elder was discontinued.... The full connection deacon was seen as an office equal to that of the full connection elder, with the same educational requirements and years of preparation for ordination.

Diaconals had a choice to be ordained deacon in full connection. If they chose to do so, they were interviewed by the Board of Ordained Ministry after attending a seminar that dealt with the history of the orders from the time of the Apostle Paul, fleshing out what it meant to be called to service and Word, and how to connect the needs of the world with the body of Christ. ... Deacons would be those calling people to use their gifts to be in ministry in the world outside the church walls.

Seven women in the California-Nevada Conference chose to become full connection deacons and were ordained on June 22, 1997. Included in this group were: Dawn Boyd, Mary Beck, Jody Kranz, Diana Bohn, Alice Ann Glenn, Dorothy Straks, and Debbi Grundman.

[I] had served the local church and denomination for many years in the area of Christian education and curriculum writing. Mary Beck and Diana Bohn were also Christian educators. Diana had a strong social justice ministry as well. Dorothy Straks and Debbi Grundman had served as diaconal ministers of music. Jody Kranz did youth and small group ministry and jail chaplaincy.

Leading up to our ordination was our presentation at Clergy Session where we were asked to [deliver] a three minute homily. ...It is difficult to preach to colleagues, but to the seven of us it was

even more intimidating since many of us had not done much preaching nor had we had courses in homiletics!

The Conference must now discern how to utilize deacons in full connection.... Our denomination has tended for years to see the elder as "the pinnacle" of leadership in the church. Deacons report ... instances of elders asking why they didn't become "real ministers," or saying things like, "You are so good, you should be an elder." ...

There are women who remained diaconal ministers. Diaconals and deacons still struggle to be seen as equals in a collegial team in multiple staff churches or cooperative parishes. There is still unfinished business around sacraments and why deacons can't do them when folks who are not ordained can do them in a local setting to which they are appointed.

### The Clergy-Diaconal Women in Ministry Association

Donna Fado Ivery is the current editor of the association's newsletter - "Voices and Silences". She writes about the publication and the association.

The Clergy-Diaconal Women in Ministry Association in the California-Nevada Annual Conference is a success story, and it has been my privilege to share in the lavish banquet of hospitality and community of God..

Within...two months of my first appointment in 1986, I received an invitation from Nadine DeWitt to go out to lunch. Senior clergywomen welcomed new clergywomen over a lunch; that was the norm. When the topic of a woman doing a man's job was raised in all sorts of ways, sometimes explicitly but more often in underlying emotional currents, it was such a pleasure and relief to sit down with a woman "doing the job." Offered at homes of clergywomen, including my own, were beautiful dinners set with china and crystal, and many casual sack lunches. ... At each meal, we would share our joys and concerns, and enjoy a feast of graciousness.

With increasing numbers of clergy and diaconal women, we reached a watershed moment. We no longer needed to be a caucus in order get a clergywoman elected to General Conference or to

be a District Superintendent. Small group informalities no longer met the needs of a large group constituency.

In 1991, the Clergywomen Steering Committee received a mini-grant from the Board of Ordained Ministry to fund a one day "Organizing for the Future" retreat. Lynn Rhodes from PSR led us through a process of discerning. We created our covenant, our reason for existing as an association. "We are Clergy and Diaconal Women in Ministry who choose to be in relationship with one another, discovering the integral community of God."

We decided to be a membership organization, with annual dues of \$10-50, and with each member deciding the amount. We decided to expand our occasional newsletter - "Voices and Silences" - to a quarterly newsletter with an honorarium for its production. We decided to include any woman under appointment in professional ministry, lay or clergy, within our membership.

In the more than 15 years since, the Steering Committee has dissolved, and a Leadership (or Midwifery) Team every so often rises to the surface. One Midwifery Team initiated an e-mail prayer chain for our members. The annual retreat had a season of dormancy and then came alive again. For the past four years it has offered an oasis of hospitality, rest, and spiritual community for our members. Our Annual Conference luncheon hasn't missed a year or a beat.... For the past six years, we have commissioned an artist to create stoles for us to give to incoming ordained and consecrated women during our Annual Conference session luncheon. When meals became too pricey, we simply asked members to increase their dues and offer scholarships so that financial concerns keep no one away.

I instantly liked the name of the newsletter, "Voices and Silences." Fresh out of seminary and the tutelage of heavy-hitter feminist biblical scholars, I identified the title as a respectful nod to a feminist principle; paying attention to the silence is primary in feminist hermeneutics. Women's voices were silenced in Christian history and text and must be acknowledged in the task of understanding the whole gospel. This propels an even richer understanding of what Good News is

discovered in Jesus Christ. What are the things we are not supposed to talk about? Silence is also a sacred space where prayer is uttered.

Dixie Jennings-Teats, Elizabeth Meikle Kennedy, and I have all served as editor of "Voices and Silences" since 1991.

Each issue of "Voices and Silences" has a theme set more than a year in advance, and writers are invited to submit articles for publishing. Some of our recent issue themes are, Finding Balance, Gather Us In, Justice Will Roll, Sustaining Families, Being Well, Whole-ly Days, and What a Friend We Have in Jesus. Articles are a blend of poetry, prayer, insights, theological reflection, sermons, and sharing. One column, "The Roundtable," is a quarterly e-mail question to which members' e-mail responses are published.

Upon the sudden death of an active clergywomen, Mary Parker-Eves, we were able to print stories by clergywomen "Remembering Mary" and sent a copy of the article in a gift of a Scarf of Tears to Mary's daughter. (Scarf of Tears: A Gift for the Healing Process of Grief is a gift-boxed hand painted silk scarf with inspirational writing and greeting card, self-published and sold by Donna Fado Ivery.)

Another regular article we call, "Introducing Members." Members write about who they are, where they came from, their call to ministry, and about what area of ministry they are most passionate. One of us, once an atheist, was called into a church sanctuary by an organ practicing; another was a postal carrier; another a mother raising a lesbian daughter in a conservative Southern church ... - so very diverse!

In our sharing...who we are, and who we experience God and Jesus to be, ...the Holy Spirit weaves through lives and connects us to one another in community. Our article guidelines clearly state that we will not be a bulletin board for church and Conference announcements. "Voices and Silences" is guided by our covenant, women who choose to be in relationship with one another. We print only things of a personal nature.

I recently brought a few copies of "Voices and Silences" ...to the International Clergywomen's Consultation in San Diego. Clergywomen from other Conferences expressed an interest in starting

*their own.. I had the impression that other clergywomen associations were weathering expansion without our own watershed "Organizing for the Future" regrouping.*

## Pregnant Preachers

Pregnancy has not been an issue for all clergywomen, but for some it resulted in unique circumstances. The following is excerpted from a much longer unpublished article written by Karen McClintock. She includes commentary and insights from women pastors throughout the Western Jurisdiction, including Barbara Bellus-Up, Rachael Berry, Roberta Corson, Victorine Healy, Denice Leslie, Holly Reinhart-Marean, Christine Shiber and Elaine Stanovsky.

*... The call to pastoral ministry and the call to parenting are not very different. I am called by God in both respects to invest in something greater than myself. ...*

*There's no "how to" guide for clergywomen who decide to have babies while they're on the job as parish pastors. And there's no training manual for committees in local churches which deal with pastoral relations. ...*

*In the weeks following my announcement to the parish that I would become a mother, the people became ambivalent about my role as their pastor. Doubts began to creep in. "Maybe she won't be available when I need her now," they began thinking; or, "I shouldn't bother her with that. She's probably not feeling too well."*

*Thereafter, the church ushers refused to let me change the attendance board, which entailed standing on a chair. Roberta Corson noted, "The parish was delighted to know that we were expecting...however, they also regarded pregnancy as 'sickness.'" ... Elaine Stanovsky suggests that "men in particular seem to need pregnant women to be needy, and there are times when a pastor cannot oblige them." ...*

*Many men in the parish I served felt excluded. ... Some complained of hearing too many sermons about pregnancy as a journey of faith and about birth as our co-creative God-given activity. As my spiritual focus became more specifically female, a gap opened between the sexes, a gap which opened more widely after the birth. While*

*women of the church found a niche in offering maternal advice and wisdom, the men stood far off.*

*... When Vickie Armour-Healy was pregnant she passed out...in the middle of her sermon one Sunday. Two women in the back row had whispered to each other, "I think she's going to pass out." "No, she's taking a drink now, it'll be okay." "No, she's wobbling." And they chatted on like this until she really did finally fall over! ...*

*The transition from maternity leave back into active ministry was not an easy one. Anger that people felt about the disruptions of church life surfaced once I returned to work and everything seemed "normal" again. ... The festering feelings of abandonment on the part of some parishioners came rushing out painfully (for us all) more than a year after my announced pregnancy. ...*

*Many clergywomen I spoke to mentioned the issue of breast feeding in public as a point of tension in the parish. ...*

*Christine Shiber describes the balancing act of caring for an infant, and caring for a parish which make "normalcy" a thing of the past: "It was hard to schedule office hours because I needed to respond to illness, transportation to childcare and doctors' appointments." ...*

*Ann Denham tells of a three-year-old daughter of an active woman who describes the process from pregnancy to going back to work like this: "The baby comes out of the mommy. And she washes it off and wraps it in a blanket and goes to a meeting." ...*

## Women and Authority

Women wrestled with the questions of authority. Were there different models of power and authority that women were called to embody? How were they to understand and exercise authority as pastors within their congregations? How did pastoral authority affect their relationships with lay women, with United Methodist Women's groups and with women clergy colleagues?

Most sensed the paradox of struggling for access to positions of power, while simultaneously attempting to supplant hierarchical power structures with collegial associations and relationships.

Barbara Troxell was one of the first to wear "both hats," as a woman serving as Program Director, then as Superintendent in the Conference

and eventually as Dean in a seminary setting.

She began writing about women, ministry and authority as early as 1982 when she delivered the Kilgore Lectures at Claremont School of Theology. She was still updating essays on "Women and Authority, in My Experience" in 2002.

She concludes the latter paper by saying, *I sense that the overarching issue is this: How do we, as women in ministry, take courageous leadership and act on our strong convictions, while at the same time evoking the leadership, the gifts, the convictions of others? How do we take authority while affirming and encouraging mutual ministry?*

From a personal perspective she writes, *I...struggled with the tension of outer expectations versus inner witness. I was slowly learning to find my voice, and to trust more fully my own insights, intuition, and God-given wisdom in company with other women who were also taking this essential journey.*

*This process was focused during the period 1975-84, in discerning whether I should let my name be put forth as a candidate for the United Methodist episcopacy. Prior to each of three quadrennial meetings (Jurisdictional Conferences in 1976, 1980, and 1984), some in the church (including many colleagues and friends whose judgment I respected and valued) felt that I would be an excellent bishop. In the late '70's some wanted me to be a pioneer, the first woman bishop within the denomination. I explored this deeply, especially looking towards 1980, during the period when I was a district superintendent. I prayed much about this possible call and also consulted with trusted colleagues and friends.*

*It became clear that I certainly could do the work, had the gifts and graces for the office, and would be a good bishop. However, the inner witness kept coming up negative, that somehow this was not the will of God for me at that time in my life. In the discernment, there was also the matter of having a personal life, desiring a life-companion, and knowing that such a person would be much harder to pursue and follow, were I to be elected bishop. So I said a clear "no" each time. Somehow this path was not right for me.*

*Was I abdicating? . . .*

Much of Barbara Troxell's writing about authority centers on honoring the inner witness, on discerning what is congruent with God's call and

one's sense of self. She also addresses the issue of women who assume positions of authority.

*...My moving to the superintendency led some clergywomen of my conference (though by no means the majority) to shift radically in their relationship with me. I was now no longer seen as colleague or peer, but as one having hierarchical power "over" them. I now could be seen as a "bureaucrat", a threatening authority figure, whose role defined her. Jealousy and threat seemed to be present. On the other hand, many women welcomed my being a superintendent, for they saw me as "their voice" on the otherwise all-male cabinet. I also kept in close touch with the women clergy, participating regularly in district and conference and jurisdictional meetings of women....*

The "process" of interviews and discernment preceding ordination and full connection is filled with tension and anxiety for candidates and Board of Ordained Ministry members alike. Questions of authority and power are necessarily at play. Marilyn Ray, who was granted full connection in 1994, was not immediately recommended. She experienced the process of interview and vote as a profound personal rejection.

## Marilyn Ray

*I went for my final interview with the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. ...*

*My mentor reassured me that all was in order and all would be well. I poured out my heart's faith as I replied carefully to each question asked of me.*

*At the end of the interview the chair (who was a woman) asked me what I would do if I was rejected for ordination? I began to cry because I knew that the vote would be against me.*

*In the midst of my sobbing I paused for a moment and prayed before answering her. Then I said, "I guess I will do as I've always done before in my life. I'll take the disappointment to God and trust that I will be strengthened and held even in the midst of this pain!" ...*

*The next day in the PSR mailroom Mary Parker-Eves asked me how the meeting had gone. (She had been my prayer partner all through seminary) I very loudly responded in anger as I told her what I'd experienced the day before. ... I cried*

out against the United Methodist system as being unfair and heartless!

All of a sudden those present in the mailroom became very silent. Mary pointed behind me. I turned to see Bishop Kelly standing close by and listening and witnessing the scene.

She came toward me in silence and placed her arms around me in a long giant hug that I'll never forget. She cried with me, and in doing so blessed me as she shared my grief.

...[T]hat warm spontaneous Spirit-directed hug began to cancel all the feelings of rejection given to me by the Board of Ordained Ministry, and by the... "successful" women clergy in the Conference who had in the past made comments ... about how a fat person was not needed for ministry, nor was one who couldn't use the "right words", or one who didn't organize every presentation in a completely rational step-by-step intellectual manner.

Bishop Kelly's hug was the healing agent that helped me...experience the meaning of Tillich's famous quote: "You are accepted..."

### Ardith Allread

Authority issues are never neatly resolved. Writing in *Voices and Silences* in 1998, Rev. Ardith Allread (San Jose District Superintendent) says:

*It seems to me that we live in a climate where women are unsure how they will be received by other women. Rather than give unintentional offense or stir up resistance, it is safer to be quiet. I experience this uncertainty in my relationship with you as a body.... Clergy women as a group have grown large enough that the most basic concerns no longer supersede our differences and thus hold us together. We are different, making different choices, having a variety of responses to other women's choices. ... Without an opportunity for dialogue to unpack what has been said/done/meant, wounds are made with no means of healing. The result is that clergy women are distancing themselves from one another. ... [T]he old reasons for coming together do not have the same urgency they did in the past. For myself, I'm doing well enough that the need for women's support isn't an immediate need. Yet, the yearning for a woman's understanding, while muted, is still there. I don't personally have a great concern about women's power or authority, but neither am I naive. We*

*always need to be mindful about these issues. And so I wonder, can we find a new basis for coming together? Can we commit the necessary time? ... If we want to build something deeper and more meaningful then there is no other way than to stick it out through differences and difficulties until we hear each other. I believe the whole church stands before this new doorway. Might not clergy women lead the way? ... If the ones who invest heavily in relationships (us) aren't willing to risk with each other, who will? The church needs us now. We need each other, now.*

### 2006

*recommended:  
for full connection and elder's orders:*

Staci Current  
Amy Beth Thornhill Durward

*recommended:  
for transition from deacon's to elder's orders:*  
Jola Bortner

Assuming an affirmative vote by this Annual Conference, Jola Bortner will surrender her orders as a deacon and will be ordained an elder. She will be the first in our Conference to effect such a transfer of orders. (She has been a member in full connection since 2000.)

The role of ordained deacons continues to be debated. The same is true of the limited clergy rights of Conference associate members and ordained local pastors who take the Course of Study rather than seek a seminary degree. After several years serving as a local pastor, Lois Edde asks this session of the Annual Conference for recognition as an associate member. Carolee Catterall became an associate member in 2000. Associate membership is not yet full connection. That and other issues regarding the ordering of the ministry continue to be under examination by the Study of Ministry Commission that reports to the 2008 General Conference.

More than a third of the churches in the California-Nevada Conference are now served by clergywomen. The "pioneers" opened the way. What lies ahead for women in ministry?

A liturgy used at a national Clergywomen's Consultation invited everyone to COME THROUGH THE DOOR AND INTO THE FUTURE:

- where we are unable to count the contributions women are making because there are so many;
  - where we can say to the aspirations of our daughters as to our sons, "yes, yes you can";
  - and servanthood is transformed into humankind.
- VENTURE FORTH TO THE NEW:
- where we are no longer known as "women ministers", but as "ministers";
  - where we claim our power, strength and beauty.
  - where we, men and women alike, know that regardless of any structures which may stand in our way, our calling in Christ is to use the gifts God has given us as co-partners in Christ's work, so that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Women entering the ministry now inherit that vision even as they bring a new set of visions and issues. What will a 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication say of those who are ordained and received into full connection this year and in years to come?

## Katie Goetz

At the 2006 Annual Conference Katie Goetz will be recommended for probationary membership and commissioning toward elder's orders.

*...[A]s a 28 year old I am too young to remember when women could not serve the church as ordained elders in full connection or for that matter a time when women were not elected to serve in the episcopacy.*

*When it comes to the future of women's ordination there are four areas...that I want to mention. ...*

*... In a church that struggles to attract and retain young people in congregations we must work to bring young adults into church leadership positions – clergy and lay leadership positions alike.*

*... [W]e must support first career clergy, instead of turning first, full time, permanent jobs into sink or swim situations...without well defined support structures and advocates. ...*

*... {W]e need to grow...in our willingness to ordain people as elders who are called to serve beyond local congregations. ...*

*Finally, ...the celebration of women's ordination doesn't mean much if we have a whole class of people who we continue to treat as second class members of the church. There are already beloved GLBT persons who serve as ordained clergy and there are others who are in our seminaries, or are considering seminary, who should be encouraged to answer God's call rather than wonder at what stage of the process their sexuality will become an issue.... If we were able to decide 50 years ago that women and men are equal in terms of their ability to serve the church, we should live as a community where men and women can serve the church. Period.*

*... Our work isn't finished yet in making the church and the clergy open to all people, but it is a journey that I am excited to be on.*



# Odette Lockwood-Stewart

## On the Way

As poet Adrienne Rich wrote in her poem, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note,"

*The door itself  
makes no promises.  
It is only a door.*

The recollections of clergywomen in full connection are not the full story of women in ministry in the California-Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

These are partial and particular fragments of faithful lives framed by just one of many doorways — the doorway into ordained ministry and full connection -- in an endless line of women disciples of Jesus Christ, lay and ordained.

What we have learned in moving through this doorway, is that it is only a door. The challenges we've faced and the joys we've known in ministry hopefully make us more open to be challenged ourselves. And the challenges are many.

Our recollections are not about crossing one threshold, gaining entrance to one guild, sharing in a sense of entitlement but enlarging our vision. The Way, the Truth, and the Life we know in Christ calls us to a constant re-imagining of our life together.

Our celebration is a time to focus and frame questions on the way:

How has 50 years of women in full connection changed the church? How have these years changed women in ministry? What women are still out?

In what ways have women in ministry been allies? In what ways have we been assimilated? What new modes of ministry have been formed and are emerging? What new doors are we called to open?

We are keeping questions alive and living the questions on the way.

Our most able editor, Bob Olmstead, included John Wesley's instructions to John Peacock to put "a final stop to the preaching of women" on his circuit. "If it were suffered, it would grow, and we know not where it would end." John Wesley's worry was well founded. It was suffered. It has grown. And we know not where it will end.

Between the date of the 2006 publication of this booklet and the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, it is our intention to publish four papers ON THE WAY: Visions of the Whole Gospel. These theological papers from the experience of women in all orders of ministry in this annual conference will be available in print and on the web.

The California-Nevada Annual Conference's unique gifts and location informs our visions as it has shaped our recollections.

Our common vision:

**Passion in Jesus Christ - Compassion for all  
Diverse Cultures – Diverse Geography – One in Christ**

Publication of "Recollections on the Way" was made possible by  
a grant from the California Nevada Conference Board of Ordained Ministry  
and a generous gift from United Methodist lay woman Laura Tower.

*I love the UMC, in its beauty and brokenness.*

*Or rather, I love the people of the UMC, in our beauty and brokenness.*

*We are a people of prayer and prophetic witness, personal piety intertwined with social holiness.*

*We are a people of potluck dinners and covenant groups, table fellowship intertwined with spiritual practices.*

*Even as I celebrate who and how we are, I mourn the ways we fail to be who and how I believe God is luring and calling us to become.*

*I celebrate this fifty year marker of full clergy rights for women, even as I mourn the painful reality that these rights do not extend to all women called into ordained ministry.*

*I celebrate the ministry and witness of the clergywomen in this conference and in the wider UMC, even as I mourn the painful reality of closed hearts, closed minds, and closed doors my foremothers have faced and my colleagues continue to confront.*

*I celebrate the radical love I have experienced in community in this church, even as I mourn the fear and distrust that keep the Judicial Council and General Conference stuck in a limited and limiting vision of church, understanding of ministry, and way of being in Christian community.*

*I celebrate my own deep sense of call and my gifts and graces for ministry affirmed within the UMC, even as I mourn the barriers and boundaries that inhibit and constrain my ministry.*

*I celebrate the compassion, passion and power I experience in my UM women colleagues and mentors, even as I mourn the energy they extend just to make and maintain space for them and their ministry.*

*I celebrate our courageous past, even as I mourn the ways we fail to create and live into a bold future.*

*As I continue in seminary and prepare for ordained ministry in the UMC, I celebrate the women prophets in our midst. I celebrate the UM women who broke down barriers and opened doors that had been slammed shut because of gender, race, ethnicity, and homophobia.*

*I celebrate the UM women who served in silence and the women who found their individual and collective voice.*

*I celebrate the UM women who trusted God to make a way out of no way.*

*I celebrate the UM women who have taught me about being Easter people in a Good Friday world.*

*I celebrate the UM women who have created community in which we can celebrate and mourn.*

*Even as I mourn our brokenness, I celebrate the beautiful witness, ministry, and vision of the women in the United Methodist Church. I celebrate the courage UM women have shown in the past, and celebrate envisioning and moving into a bold future together.*

(Anna Blaedel is currently a seminary student at Pacific School of Religion; she is serving an internship at Epworth United Methodist Church in Berkeley; she hopes to be ordained in the ministry of the United Methodist Church.)

